

7.0 BASELINE: VISUAL

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

BASELINE: VISUAL

EXTENT OF VISIBILITY

- 7.1

A ZTV has been produced to outline the potential areas where the Proposed Development may be visible, covering an area of 2 km2 with the Site at the centre (**Figure 2.1**). It is a tool for a high-level understanding of the extent of visibility, which was further interrogated through review of individual viewpoints using field surveys and digital software.
- 7.2

The ZTV illustrates that the greatest extent of visibility of the Proposed Development (indicated by red and orange on the ZTV) would be in views north-south on the A329 and A33 (IDR) and Howard Street, east-west on Castle Street and to the immediate north around San Francisco Way and Dusseldorf Way. To the west of the IDR, throughout the Castle Hill and Russell Street area, there would be glimpsed and incidental views of the upper storeys of the Proposed Development. In this area, the Proposed Development would come in and out of view through building gaps and along axial routes, filtered by intervening development. A similar visual interaction would be experience to the southeast of the Site, around Southampton Street and the River Kennet.

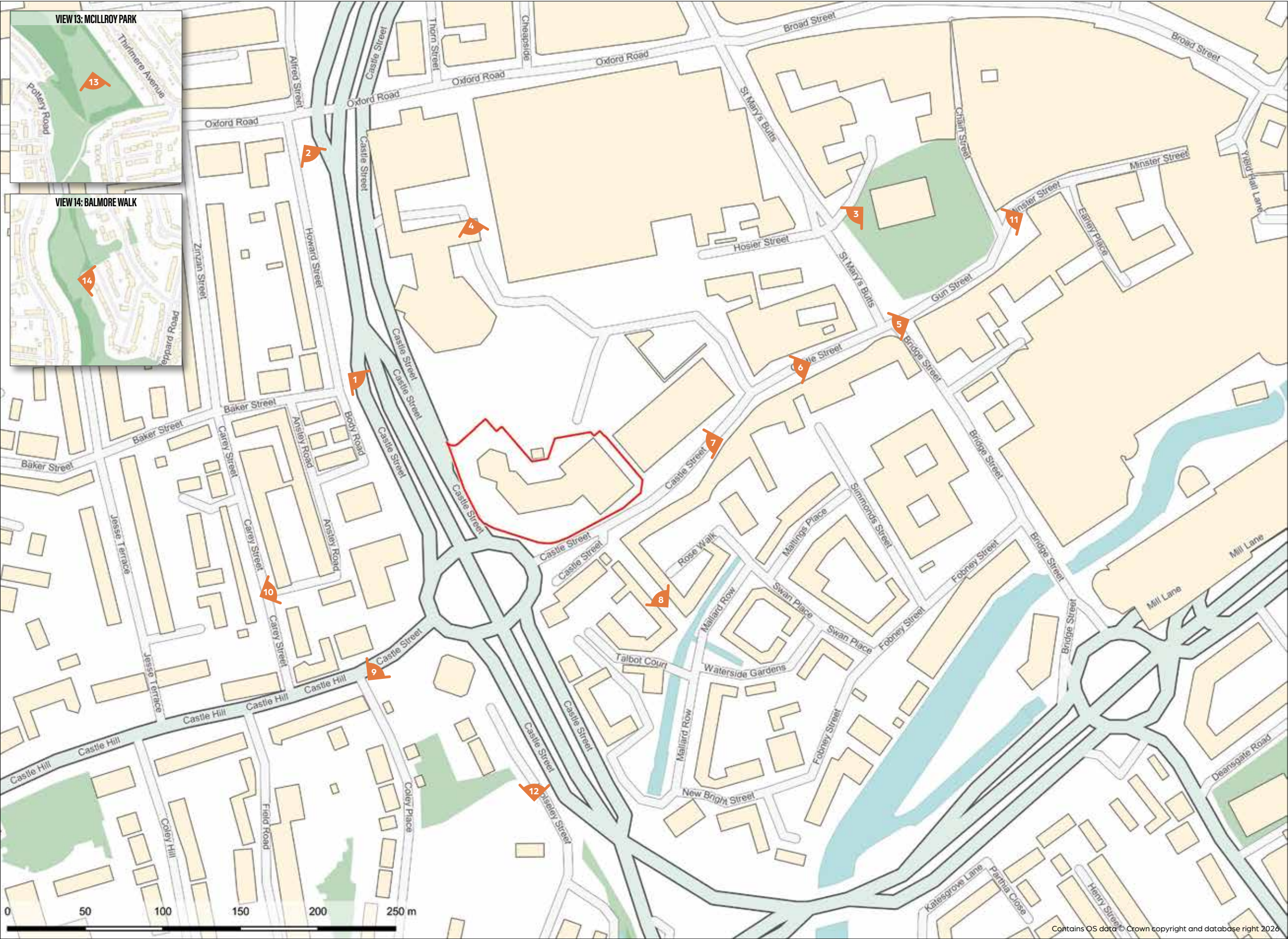
REPRESENTATIVE VIEWS

- 7.3

As part of pre-application discussions with the LPA, 14 viewpoint locations were identified to support the assessment (**Figure 7.1**). The location of the representative views has been informed by the preparation of the ZTV and the two sets of data are overlaid at **Figure 7.2**.
- 7.4

A selection of the baseline photography is included in this section, with a full set provided at **Appendix 2.o**.
- 7.5

The views are representative of the experience of visual receptors within an area. The rationale for the selection of each view is provided at **Table 7.1**.



**VIEWPOINT
LOCATION PLAN**

-  Application Site
1. Howard Street/Baker Street
 2. Howard Street
 3. Reading Minster
 4. Queens Walk/Broad Street Mall
 5. St Mary Butts/Gun Street
 6. Castle Street (1)
 7. Castle Street (2)
 8. Almshouses
 9. Castle Hill
 10. Anstey Road
 11. Gun Street
 12. Footbridge over A329
 13. McIlroy Park
 14. Balmore Walk

LOCATION:
Thames Valley Police, Reading

DATE:
May 2026

SCALE:
1:2,500 @ A3

FIGURE 7.1 View Location Plan

 **NORTH**



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VIEWPOINT LOCATION PLAN ZTV OVERLAY

- Application Site**
- Howard Street/Baker Street
 - Howard Street
 - Reading Minster
 - Queens Walk/Broad Street Mall
 - St Mary Butts/Gun Street
 - Castle Street (1)
 - Castle Street (2)
 - Almshouses
 - Castle Hill
 - Anstey Road
 - Gun Street
 - Footbridge over A329
 - McIlroy Park
 - Balmore Walk

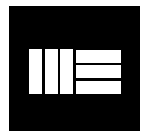
LOCATION:
Thames Valley Police, Reading

DATE:
May 2026

SCALE:
1:2,500 @ A3

FIGURE 7.2 View Location Plan with overlay of the ZTV

▲ NORTH



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VISUAL RECEPTORS

7.6 The text below sets out the different groups of people who may experience views of the development, the places where they will be affected and the nature of the views and visual amenity at those points.

USERS OF READING TOWN CENTRE

- 7.7 Reading town centre covers a large area which is centred around the main shopping high street of Broad Street, extending to the eastern side of the IDR to Oxford Road, a secondary high street. The area correlates with TCA 4 and is surrounded by the IDR (also partially incorporating it) and residential development on the edge of Reading town centre. Some routes within the town centre are completely pedestrianised. This includes Broad Street, Cross Street, Union Street, Butter Market, Town Hall Square and Queen Victoria Street.
- 7.8 After the Second World War, Reading experienced significant change in its built environment and infrastructure. Following the clearance of historic terraced and small residential properties, particularly along Castle Street, this area was infilled with larger urban footprints of the Broad Street Mall Shopping Centre (1971) and the Oracle Shopping centre (1999). The result is a mixed, eclectic character, combining historic buildings and recent large-scale retail developments, which form the receptors' visual amenity.
- 7.9 Receptors in this group will be pedestrians and commuters, leisurely moving through the retail/commercial core, as well as walking towards Reading Station. Receptors will be focused primarily on navigation from the outskirts of the town centre to the retail/commercial core, particularly along Broad Street, Bridge Street and Friar Street. Commuters are likely to be focused on movement to and from Reading Station, located to the north of the town centre.
- 7.10 As this group of receptors travels through the area, most will be aware of the heavily urbanised character of the town centre and the mixed quality of development. There is an awareness of the close proximity of the IDR and the general lack of green or open spaces.
- 7.11 For receptors likely to be utilising retail, hospitality and leisure premises, their focus will be reserved to the enjoyment of amenity space, public

realm and designated pedestrianised areas. Key areas of public realm include the pedestrianised shopping street of Broad Street, as well as along Oracle Riverside, specifically designed for users of the Oracle Shopping centre.

- 7.12 The range and mix of buildings, their varying age and character, continue along the principal commercial streets. Receptors will notice the variation in building types, materials and quality, though the main focus will be on the busy arterial route and the commercial/retail premises at ground floor level. Overall, the visual amenity of receptors visiting the town centre is **Medium**.
- 7.13 The Site is located within Reading Town Centre, between the historic thoroughfare of Castle Street and the Broad Street Mall shopping centre on Hosier Street. Visual receptors may pass around the perimeter of the Site when travelling on Castle Street, Cusden Walk or San Francisco Libre Walk, which wraps around the rear of the Police Station towards the IDR.
- 7.14 Receptors on Dusseldorf Way will experience views south towards the rear of the Site, as seen across the community gardens. The rear of the building is characterised by office accommodation, hard and soft landscaping and carparking.
- 7.15 On Castle Street, the building is set back behind an area of hardstanding and carparking, which contributes to the fragmented building line of the north side of the historic thoroughfare. Areas of the building incorporate reflective film, owing to its use as a police station, which contribute to inactive and low-quality elevations at the front and rear of the building. There is some landscaping to Castle Street, the northwest corner of the street and some trees along the IDR. Overall, the Site does not contribute to the visual amenity of receptors.
- 7.16 Representative views: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11 and 12
- 7.17 Visual amenity value: **Medium**



Figure 7.3 View 4: Queens Walk/Broad Street Mall – existing (EB7)



Figure 7.4 View 5: St Mary Butts/Gun Street – existing (EB7)



Figure 7.5 View 6: Castle Street (1) – existing (EB7)



Figure 7.6 View 7: Castle Street (2) – existing (EB7)

USERS OF CHURCH OF ST MARY (READING MINSTER) AND CHURCHYARD

- 7.18 St Mary’s Church (Reading Minster) and churchyard are located within the centre of Reading town centre and at the heart of Reading’s historic core.
- 7.19 Receptors will include visitors to the Grade I listed Church of St Mary and associated churchyard. They are likely to have an appreciation of St Mary’s Church as a heritage asset and as a place of worship, which has stood at the centre of Reading since the medieval period. The high architectural quality of the church and its landmark tower are best appreciated within the immediate vicinity.
- 7.20 There is an area of public realm directly in front of the church, with a line of public benches facing southwards. To the rear of the church, within the churchyard, are interconnecting paved paths, providing access to and from the town centre. Receptors are likely to stop and be aware of the busy main road of St Mary’s Butts and the church’s location within a busy urban centre.
- 7.21 Visual receptors will experience an enclosed environment within the church yard, particularly in summer months, with mature trees and urban development on each side bounding the open space. Views out are subsequently limited; however, there will be an awareness of the listed buildings on Castle Street and St Mary Butts and the modern retail developments on Broad Street and St Mary’s Butts.
- 7.22 Due to the scale of the existing buildings on the Site and the extent of intervening development, there is no meaningful visual interaction between the Thames Valley Police Station and the area surrounding Reading Minster. The Site does not contribute to the visual amenity of visitors to Reading Minster.
- 7.23 Representative views: 3 and 11
- 7.24 Visual amenity value: **High**



Figure 7.7 View 3: Reading Minster – existing (EB7)

RESIDENTS OUTSIDE OF READING TOWN CENTRE

- 7.25 Receptors in this group are the residents living in the residential areas located to the west, northwest and south of the town centre, in an area broadly correlating with TCA 2.
- 7.26 The streets to the west of the town centre comprise a series of largely linear streets which form the RSCHCA. Many of the streets to the west of the Site such as Russell Street, Waylen Street or Zinzan Street, are oriented north-south. Others, including Baker Street and Castle Hill are orientated east-west, provided views towards the town centre.
- 7.27 Houses in this area are predominantly two storey terraces dating to the 19th century. The linear form of development, consistent building height and line creates an enclosed character on many residential streets, which limits longer range views.
- 7.28 Residents to the west and south of the town centre will be familiar with the busy dual carriage way of the IDR and other key arterial routes to and from the town centre, with high levels of traffic and movement noticeable. This a particularly detracting feature for some residents, whose homes look out onto the road infrastructure.
- 7.29 In views eastwards (particularly along Howard Street, Castle Hill and Oxford Road), receptors will be aware of the high activity associated with the centre of Reading and the high levels of pedestrian traffic travelling to and from the retail centre, further contributing to the sense of movement and activity. They will likewise, be familiar with tall and modern development including Fountain House, Queens Court/Pentahotel and Chatham Tower.
- 7.30 Visual receptors to the south of the town centre reside in 20th century residential developments. This area has an enclosed character, defined by dense vegetative borders and the River Kennet. Receptors to the south of the town centre may have a more secluded sense of their environs for this reason, despite their proximity to the town centre.



Figure 7.8 View 1: Howard Street/Baker Street – existing (EB7)



Figure 7.10 View 9: Castle Hill – existing (EB7)



Figure 7.9 View 2: Howard Street – existing (EB7)



Figure 7.11 View 10: Carey Street – existing (EB7)

7.31 The principal interaction between residents outside of the town centre and the Site would be in longer range views along the IDR. From these positions (represented by Views 1, 2 and 12), the west elevation and hexagonal block of the Thames Valley Police Station is seen against the background of civic, commercial and historic development of the town centre. Receptors will be aware of the town centre as being distinct the residential area, separated physically and visually from their homes by the IDR. As such, the Site makes a neutral contribution to the visual amenity of receptors.

7.32 Representative views: 1, 2, 9, 10, 12

7.33 Visual amenity value: **Medium**

ROAD USERS

7.34 Road users will be travelling around Reading town centre on the IDR and other principal roads. Visual receptors will be primarily focused on vehicular movement and activity associated with the road, travelling to and from the retail centres in and around the town centre and to destinations beyond Reading, accessing the M4 via Castle Hill/Bath Road or the A33 relief road. The focus of receptors will be on activity associated with the road, including vehicular movement, noise, traffic levels and pedestrian crossings.

7.35 As road users travel through the area, most will be aware of the heavily urbanised character of Reading town centre, the tight knit grain of development and the motorway-like quality of the IDR and adjoining slip roads which cut through the urban development. There is an awareness of a general lack of green or open spaces. The principal focus on direction of movement will mean that certain details in the urban environment would remain unnoticed. The overall impression would be of a busy urban centre, characterised by varied forms of development and key arterial routes.

7.36 Road users would pass the Site along its western boundary either at upper roundabout level or the underpass. Receptors may be away of the form of the building or perceive the hexagonal form of the northern block or hipped roof form. Receptors may also be aware of the trees which provide a verdant edge to the Site and soften the urban development along the IDR.

7.37 Representative views: 1, 2 and 12

7.38 Visual amenity value: **Low**



Figure 7.12 View 12: Footbridge over A329 – existing (EB7)

USERS OF MCILROY PARK

7.39 McIlroy Park is located to the west of the town centre, approximately 3.2km to the northwest of the Site.

7.40 Receptors within McIlroy Park are likely to be pedestrians using the space for amenity, sports and leisure. It is an extensive park, with an open expanse enclosed by a thick woodland boundaries, which defines it from the suburban housing which surrounds it.

7.41 Due to its position on the ridgeline, there are elevated and long-range views towards Reading town centre. In such views, receptors will be aware of the wider urban environs which comprise a mixture of development including tall buildings.

7.42 Representative views: 13

7.43 Visual amenity value: **High**



Figure 7.13 View 13: McIlroy Park – existing (EB7)

USERS OF BALMORE PARK

- 7.44

Balmore Park is located to the to the north of the town centre, approximately 1.85km to the north of the Site at the closest point.
- 7.45

Visual receptors in this location are likely to be pedestrians making use of the space using the space for amenity, sports and leisure. It is a public park featuring an open greensward with mature vegetation and paved pathways. There is a small woodland to the east of the park which features mature oaks and beech trees. The northern section is a hay meadow leading to scrubland and new planting of trees along Jubilee Way.
- 7.46

Receptors visiting the park are likely to be focused on the verdant environment which surrounds them, though in areas of elevated topography, they will be able to appreciate longer range views over Reading. Here, receptors become aware of the wider urban environs of Reading town centre. From the boundaries of the park, receptors may also be aware of the surrounding residential development.
- 7.47

Representative views: 14
- 7.48

Visual amenity value: **High**



Figure 7.14 View 14: Balmore Park – existing (EB7)

SUMMARY

7.49 **Table 7.1** below provides an overview of the visual receptor considerations, including any additional considerations such as the proximity to key transport nodes.

VISUAL RECEPTOR / STATIC VIEW	REPRESENTATIVE VIEWS AND RATIONALE FOR SELECTION	VISUAL AMENITY VALUE
Users of Reading town centre	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11 and 12 Viewpoints selected are representative of the pattern of pedestrian movement in Reading town centre. This includes close and medium range views orientated towards the Site, such as Queen’s Walk and St Mary Butts, and a kinetic sequence moving west on Castle Street within the StMBCSCA. The viewpoints include approach routes to the town centre from residential areas, on Oxford Road, Castle Hill or Wolseley Street.	Medium
Users of St Mary’s Church and Churchyard	3 and 11 Views selected based on their proximity to Reading Minster and its churchyard. Users of the Church will be entering and exiting the church, users of the churchyard are likely to be using established routes into the centre or utilising amenity space.	High
Residents outside of Reading town centre	1, 2, 9, 10, 12 Views selected are based on the experience of residents living to the west and the south of the town centre. Owing to the tight street pattern, scale of built form and enclosed nature of development, viewpoints have been located where residents are likely to experience maximum visibility of the Proposed Development, as indicated by the ZTV. This includes Howard Street, Castle Hill and Carey Street.	Medium
Road users	12 Views selected are based on the experience of road users driving through and around the town centre on the principal roads.	Low
Users of Mcllroy Park	13 Viewpoint selected owing to the elevated topography of Mcllroy Park which allows for long, unobstructed views across Reading town centre. The view is taken from broadly the position of Local View 1, though it has been reorientated towards the Site.	High
Users of Balmore Park	14 Viewpoint selected owing to the elevated topography of Balmore Park which allows for long, unobstructed views across Reading town centre. Viewpoint located on a principal pedestrian route, outside of the woodland area.	High

Table 7.2 Summary of Visual Receptor Baseline

8.0

ASSESSMENT: HERITAGE ASSETS

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

ASSESSMENT: HERITAGE ASSETS

- 8.1 This section assesses the impact of the Proposed Development on the heritage assets identified in **Section 5.0**. For ease of reference, the Heritage Asset Plan with ZTV overlay is provided at **Figure 8.1**.



HERITAGE ASSET PLAN ZTV OVERLAY

Application Site		
Conservation Areas		
A. St Mary's Butts and Castle Street	B. Russell Street and Castle Hill	C. Market Place and London Street
Listed Buildings		
Grade I		
1. Church of St Mary	2. Greyfriars Church	
Grade II*		
3. Holybrook House	5. Church of St Mary	7. Nos 154 to 160 (Even) and Railings to Street
4. 15 Castle Street, 17 Castle Street, Front Railings and Mounting Block, 19 Castle Street and Associated Front Railings	6. Culvert on Holy Brook Running South Westwards From SU71441/73234 to 71327/73133	
Grade II		
8. 43, 45, 47 and 49, 51 Castle Street	35. Seven Bridges House	64. Saxone
9. Talbot House	36. 33-39, Baker Street	65. 26, and 28, Southampton Street
10. 59 and 61 Castle Street	37. 3 and 5, Cheapside	66. Quadrant Walls and Railings to Former No 64 (Greyfriars Vicarage)
11. 21, 23 and 25, 27, 33-37, 39 Castle Street	38. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12, 13 and 14, 15 Gun Street	67. Church of The Holy Trinity
12. Vachel Almhouses, 1-32 Castle Street	39. Clevedon House, 125-127 Castle Hill and 1 Coley Hill	68. 3, Castle Crescent
13. 14 and 16, Castle Street (The Sun Inn)	40. Group of Four Churchyard Tombs North of The Church of St Mary	69. Butler's Wine Vaults
14. 3 and 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 Castle Street	41. 144a-152, Castle Street	70. Swallow House
15. The Castle Tap, 120 Castle Street and 122 and 122a Castle Hill	42. 3-13, Coley Hill	71. 149-169 Oxford Road
16. 8, 10 and 12 Castle Street	43. Group of Four Churchyard Tombs to The East of The Church of St Mary	72. 118, Oxford Road
17. Blenheim Terrace, 97-105 Castle Street	44. 1 St Mary's Gate	73. 94 and 96, Wolseley Street
18. Former Cottage to the Rear of 8 Castle Street	45. 15, 15a, 17 and 17a, Coley Hill	74. 4 and 6, Bath Road
19. 107, 109, 111 Castle Hill	46. 55, Baker Street	75. Building on South East Corner
20. The Horn Inn	47. Church House, Reading	76. The Henry Building at Katesgrove Primary School including Boundary Wall and Former Caretaker's Cottage
21. 124, 126, 128-132 Castle Hill	48. The Royal Meteorological Society, 104 Oxford Road	77. 61-79, Baker Street
22. 35, 36 and 37 St Mary's Butts	49. Congregational Church and Numbers 89 and 89a	78. Church of St Giles and Churchyard Tombs
23. Kent House, 4 and 4a Howard Street	50. 67 and 68, Broad Street	79. Reading Synagogue
24. Simmonds Malthouse	51. 21-25, 27, 29, 31-35, Coley Hill	80. St Giles' War Shrine
25. 2 and 4 Bridge Street	52. 41, Russell Street	81. 1-31, Queen Victoria Street
26. 6-10 Bridge Street	53. W I Palmer Memorial Hall	82. The George Hotel
27. Queen Victoria Jubilee Fountain	54. 95, Broad Street	83. 2, Tilehurst Road
28. 113, 115, 117-121 Castle Hill and Castleton House, 123 Castle Hill	55. 162a, Castle Street	84. 120 and 122 Oxford Road
29. 134-144 Castle Hill	56. Yeomanry House	85. 171-177 Oxford Road
30. Harrison Testimonial Cross	57. 139-141 Oxford Road	86. 122 and 124, Chatham Street
31. Rox Borough House, 101 Oxford Road	58. 24-34, Russell Street	87. 147, Friar Street
32. 55 and 55a St Mary's Butts	59. The Former Mitre Inn	88. St Giles Vicarage, and St Giles's Vicarage
33. Building now part of Courage's Brewery	60. 6-22, Russell Street	89. Wall Enclosing St Giles's Vicarage Garden
34. The Allied Arms Inn, 57 St Mary's Butts	61. 168, 172 and 174, Castle Street	90. 72-76, Southampton Street
Locally Listed Buildings		
94. 85 Broad Street	95. The Bugle, 144 Friar Street	91. 2, 3 and 3a Broad Street
		92. 17 and 18 King Street
		93. 124 Oxford Road

LOCATION:
Thames Valley Police, Reading

DATE:
May 2026

SCALE:
1:5,000 @ A3

FIGURE 8.1 Heritage Asset Plan with ZTV overlay

▲ NORTH

INDIRECT EFFECTS ON HERITAGE ASSETS (SETTING)
ST MARY'S BUTTS AND CASTLE STREET CONSERVATION AREA
INCLUDING LISTED BUILDINGS ON CASTLE STREET

8.2	Due to the position of the Site and potential visual interaction with the listed buildings on Castle Street which have a coterminous setting, and contribute to the character and appearance of the StMBCSCA, the following listed buildings are assessed as part of the CA: 8.2.1 43, 45, 47, 49 and 51 Castle Street – Map Ref. 8 8.2.2 Talbot House – Map Ref. 9 8.2.3 59 and 61 Castle Street – Map Ref. 10 8.2.4 21, 23 and 25, 27, 33–37, 39 Castle Street – Map Ref. 11 8.2.5 14 and 16 Castle Street (The Sun Inn) – Map Ref. 13 8.2.6 3 and 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 Castle Street – Map Ref. 14 8.2.7 8, 10 and 12 Castle Street – Map Ref. 16 8.2.8 Former Cottage to the Rear of 8 Castle Street – Map Ref. 18 8.2.9 The Horn Inn – Map Ref. 20 8.2.10 35, 36 and 37 St Mary's Butts – Map Ref. 22 8.2.11 2 and 4 Bridge Street – Map Ref. 25 8.2.12 6–10 Bridge Street – Map Ref. 26	Street. This is further emphasised at ground floor, which is separated into different active uses.	8.11	Owing to the alignment of Castle Street, which bends towards the Site, the Proposed Development would terminate views looking west on Castle Street (see Views 5, 6 and 7). The increase in height and density on Site would result in a considerable change in the setting of the CA, with the Proposed Development seen in conjunction with the listed buildings on both sides of Castle Street.
8.3	The impact on the Church of St Mary (Grade I) and the listed buildings which surround is are assessed later in this section.	8.6	8.7	8.12
8.4	The Proposed Development would introduce a mixed-use development on the north side of Castle Street, adjoining the StMBCSCA. The Proposed Development comprises two blocks of residential development with ancillary and retail uses at ground floor. While the Proposed Development would result in an increase in density on the Site in proximity to the CA boundary, the Proposed Development has been designed in response to the scale, form and materiality of the historic core of Reading, to create a well-integrated and contextual development.	A detailed analysis of the historic environment was undertaken by JTP architects, and this informed the elevational treatment of Blocks A and B including red and grey chequerboard brickwork, vertical grouping of windows, banding details and a clear hierarchy. The DAS further details the variety of shop fronts on display in Reading and outlines the shopfront strategy for the Proposed Development, incorporating traditional elements such as stall risers, fascia boards and pilasters.	The Proposed Development offers the opportunity to repair a number of historic urban characteristics which were lost when the area underwent extensive redevelopment in the late 20th century. The existing building line will be brought forward towards Castle Street, while also introducing some street trees, landscaping and seating. This building line would be closer to the pattern of historic development on Castle Street, which is terraced and hard to the pavement.	The visual impact of the Proposed Development is reduced through the stepped form of the Proposed Development, which culminates in the northwest corner. This arrangement aligns with the height distributions outlined in the Council's Minster Quarter Framework, which seeks to mitigate impact on the historic environment. Block A steps up to the north of Castle Street, increasing to seven storeys on Cusden Walk, to six storeys to the west and 10 storeys on Flint Street. Block B has been positioned in the northwest of the Site, towards existing and emerging tall and large-scale development to the north, around Broad Street Mall. The Magistrates Court further mediates between the scale of the Proposed Development and fine urban grain of Castle Street, in stepping down to two storeys. The form of the Proposed Development can be appreciated in views west, where the blocks step down towards the listed buildings on both sides of Castle Street.
8.5	The lowest element of Block A lines Castle Street along the boundary of the CA, opposite the listed buildings on the south side. At four storeys, the Block A is similar to building heights on Castle Street which are broadly consistent at three storeys, some with an additional set back roof storey. The massing of Block A is further broken down through the use of brick work detailing and architectural treatment to create the impression of a series of terraced buildings, rather than a single block, which is a key characteristic of the historic development on Castle	8.8	8.9	8.13
		This bringing forward of the building line serves to create a more enclosed environment at the west end of Castle Street, which would help to reduce the presence of the IDR which is detracting to the setting of the CA. It is proposed to relocate carparking and servicing to the rear of the Site (accessed from Hosier Street) which would further help to reduce the movement of traffic accessing the Site from the west and on Castle Street.	The Proposed Development incorporates a new pedestrian route called 'Flint Street', which takes its name from a historic road to the northeast of the Site which was lost during the redevelopment of the late 20th century. This pedestrian route aims to improve pedestrian connectivity between Castle Hill and the town centre.	The StMBCSCA appraisal identifies a series of key views, which are oriented eastwards and southwards along Castle Street. The views take in a number of landmark buildings such as the Vachel Almshouses, St Mary's Church and Reading Minster. As one moves towards Reading Minster, the Proposed Development would be a peripheral to these key views and the focus would remain the high architectural quality of the listed buildings which line the historic route. The Proposed Development would preserve all of the key views identified in the StMBCSCA appraisal.
		8.10		8.14
		A large proportion of the ground floor will accommodate active uses, including a supermarket. This arrangement of retail at ground floor with residential over is characteristic of the CA and is typical of market towns more widely. Active uses are proposed to continue along Cusden Walk and Flint Street, encouraging pedestrian movement through the Site and CA. Along the Castle Street elevation, urban form will be softened through the introduction of street trees and landscaping which will provide space for pedestrians to sit and appreciate the listed buildings on the south side of the road.		The proposed change would be consistent with the existing and emerging context to the north of Castle Street, which is identified for an intensification of tall buildings. The elements of the heritage assets' setting which contribute to special interest, namely the historic functional, spatial and visual relationship between the individual 16th to 19th century buildings, would not be affected by the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would cause no harm to the special interest of the listed buildings within the CA.

- 8.15

The character and appearance of the CA, which derives from the densely developed historic thoroughfare of Castle Street and the medieval square around Reading Minster, would also be preserved. Overall, considering the improvements to the appearance of the Site, introduction of ground floor activation and reinstated features of the historic urban environment, the Proposed Development would enhance the setting of the CA, making a minor improvement to its overall significance.

RUSSELL STREET AND CASTLE HILL CONSERVATION AREA - MAP REF. B
- 8.16

The Proposed Development would introduce two blocks of mixed use, residential led development of up to 16 storeys to the east of the CA. The ZTV indicates that would be no or very limited visibility of the Proposed Development throughout the majority of the CA, which covers a large area of 19th century residential development to the west of Reading town centre.
- 8.17

Due to the orientation of the roads, the height and form of the residential development and the separating distance between the Site and the CA, visibility would predominantly be limited to glimpsed views of the upper storeys through building gaps and in rear gardens. In these locations, the Proposed Development would be seen as part of the modern commercial and civic development which characterises the town centre.
- 8.18

Greater visibility would occur along the eastern boundary of the CA on Howard Street, and on east-west routes such as Castle Hill, Anstey Road and Baker Street (see Views 1, 2 and 10). The full extent of the Proposed Development would be visible from the east end of Castle Hill and on Howard Street, where the stepped form of Blocks A and B would be appreciated. The form of the Proposed Development, which is arranged in two blocks, would help to reduce the appearance of massing when viewed from the west.
- 8.19

The character and appearance of the CA, which lies in the spatial arrangement and architectural detailing of the 19th and early 20th century housing, would not be affected by the Proposed Development. The eastern boundary of the CA is well defined by the IDR, which is a significant townscape barrier between the residential suburb and the town centre. When viewed across this busy dual carriage way, the Site would remain physically and functionally separate from the low-scale residential development of the CA.

- 8.20

The increase in scale and density of the Site would appear contextual in the town centre, which has a different urban form to the Victorian suburb. Here the Proposed Development would be seen in conjunction with other mid and high-rise buildings such as Fountain House, Queens Court and Chatham Tower. Overall, the Proposed Development would preserve the special interest of the CA and result in no harm to the character and appearance of the 19th century residential suburb.

CHURCH OF ST MARY (GRADE I) AND CHURCHYARD TOMBS (GRADE II) - MAP REFS. 1, 40 AND 43
- 8.21

The Proposed Development would introduce a new development of up to 16 storeys in the wider setting of the Grade I listed Reading Minster and the associated churchyard tombs, at a distance of approximately 225m.
- 8.22

The potential visual interaction between the Proposed Development and the listed buildings is demonstrated by Views 3 and 11.
- 8.23

When moving around the immediate setting of the church, which is defined by its heavily tree-planted churchyard, there would be limited perception of the Proposed Development. As one moves around the exterior of the church, different elements of the Proposed Development would come in and out of view, with the greatest extent of the building seen through the building gap on Hosier Street. As demonstrated by View 3, the separation between Blocks A and B would be appreciable from within the setting of the minster, which helps to reduce the appearance of massing, seen instead as a collection of buildings.
- 8.24

Approaching the churchyard from the north or east, the Proposed Development would be seen in conjunction with the church, with Block A and B seen alongside the tower and nave to varying degrees. The Site is separated from the church by St Mary's Butts, a busy high street, Castle Street and a large area of vacant land to the south of Hosier Street. Seen across this distance and urban context, the 16-storey element would not compete visually with the chequerboard tower of Reading Minster, appearing contextual in the environment.
- 8.25

The form and materiality of the Proposed Development would ensure that the building is understood as being part of the former Civic Core adjacent to the IDR, where there is an established character of modern development.

- 8.26

As one moves round the building to observe the fine architectural detailing of the tower or enter the church, the Proposed Development would largely be occluded by historic development on St Mary's Butts.
- 8.27

In summer months, the Proposed Development would be largely screened by mature trees within the churchyard and on St Mary's Butts.
- 8.28

The StMBCSCA identifies St Mary's Church as the focal point of the CA, with key views identified looking east on Castle Street and St Mary's Butts towards the landmark tower. Due to the position of the Site at the west end of Castle Street, there would be no visibility of the Proposed Development in the key easterly views of Reading Minster.
- 8.29

While there would be a degree of intervisibility, the Site would remain physically and functionally separate from St Mary's Church and its churchyard setting. The elements of setting which contribute to the special interest of the Church, namely the churchyard, tombs, monuments and surrounding historic development on St Mary's Butts, Gun Street and Chain Street, would be unaffected by the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would therefore preserve the special interest of the Grade I listed Reading Minster and associated Grade II tombstones. No harm would arise from the Proposed Development.

HOLYBROOK HOUSE (GRADE II*) - MAP REF. 3
- 8.30

Holybrook House is located to the southwest of the Site, on the opposite side of Castle Street. The Proposed Development would introduce a mixed-use development of four to 16 storeys to the setting of the building.
- 8.31

The setting of the former townhouse is defined by the linear historic development which lines the south side of Castle Street, and the IDR interchange which encloses it to the north and west.
- 8.32

The Proposed Development would remove a low-quality and large-scale civic building dating from the second half of the 20th century with a high-quality alternative. The Proposed Development has been designed to step up in height away from the historic development on the south side of Castle Street. As described, the principal elevation of Block A better reflects the fine urban grain of Castle Street, which is lined with narrow building frontages, through the differentiation of brickwork, and window and door detailing and proportions.

- 8.33 Looking north from Holybrook House, the Proposed Development would be seen in the context of modern commercial development around Broad Street Mall and existing tall buildings on Oxford Road and around the station.
- 8.34 When looking south at the principal elevation of the 18th century townhouse, with refined proportions and brickwork, the Proposed Development would be out of view. The association between Holybrook House and the neighbouring listed buildings, which contributes to its special interest, would be unaffected by the Proposed Development. Looking east along Castle Street, the integration of high-quality brick detailing, active uses and landscaping would improve the appearance of the Site in the setting of Holybrook House. The western edge of the Proposed Development, which lies closest to Holybrook House, would be further softened through the retention and supplementation of planting.
- 8.35 The Proposed Development would preserve the special interest of the Grade II* listed Holybrook House. No harm would arise as a result of the Proposed Development.

15, 17 AND 19 CASTLE STREET (GRADE II*) – MAP REF 4

- 8.36 The Proposed Development is located to the west of the Grade II* listed buildings in this grouping, and on the opposite side of Castle Street.
- 8.37 Due to the alignment of the road, when approaching from the east end of Castle Street (View 6), the Proposed Development would be seen in conjunction with the elevations of 15, 17 and 19 Castle Street. Here, the stepped form of Blocks A and B, which increase from four to 16 storeys away from the Grade II* listed buildings, would help to create separation and reduce the appearance of massing on the Site. The Proposed Development would be seen over the roofline of the Magistrates Court and read as part of the established modern urban environment which abuts Castle Street at the west end.
- 8.38 When looking south at the principal elevations of the buildings, where the method of construction and architectural detailing can be best appreciated, the Proposed Development would be a peripheral element separated visually by Castle Street. The Proposed Development incorporates materials and architectural detailing which are complimentary to the former townhouses, particularly 19 Castle Street, which displays the traditional vitrified brick ends and red brick

quoins common throughout Reading. The chosen materiality and form, incorporating parapets along the front of Block A, would help to better integrate the Proposed Development into the setting of the Grade II* listed buildings.

- 8.39 The historic, functional and visual association between the individual listed buildings, and the other 18th and 19th century buildings on Castle Street and wider StMBCSCA would be unaffected by the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would build on and improve an existing character of modern, large-scale development to the west of the Grade II* townhouses in this group.
- 8.40 Despite an increase in height and density on the Site, there would be no change to the intrinsic interest of the listed heritage assets, nor on the elements of setting which contribute to special interest. The Proposed Development would, therefore, preserve the special interest of the listed buildings.

CHURCH OF ST MARY (GRADE II*) – MAP REF. 5

- 8.41 The Proposed Development would introduce two new mixed-use buildings of up to 16 storeys to the west of the Church of St Mary.
- 8.42 There would be a notable increase in the density of development on the Site as a result of the Proposed Development. Blocks A and B would be seen over the roofline of the Magistrates Court, to the west of the Church of St Mary in views west on Castle Street. The appearance of massing would be reduced through the distribution of height across the two blocks, which step up to the north from four to 16 storeys.
- 8.43 Looking west on Castle Street towards the Church of St Mary, the form, position and materiality would ensure that the tall building would remain visually distinct from the Church of St Mary (see Views 5 and 6). The StMBCSCA identifies the Church of St Mary as a landmark, featuring in views east on Castle Street. In these views, the Proposed Development would be a peripheral element, set well apart from the principal elevation of the church and maintaining its primacy on Castle Street.
- 8.44 The setting of the Church of St Mary is formed by the historic residential and retail buildings, and public houses on Castle Street. This historic, spatial and visual association, which is best expressed in views east on Castle Street, would be unaffected by the Proposed Development. The

Proposed Development would preserve the special interest of the Grade II* Church of St Mary, resulting in no harm.

VACHEL ALMSHOUSES (GRADE II) – MAP REF. 12

- 8.45 The Site is located to the immediate north of the Vachel Almshouses, on the opposite side of Castle Street. The Proposed Development would introduce a mixed-use development to the setting of the buildings, which would be seen from the private north-south road along which the almshouses are arranged.
- 8.46 The Proposed Development has been designed in response the scale and materiality of the almshouses. The height of Block A steps down along Castle Street to meet the lower scale of the Vachel Houses and flanking historic development along Castle Street. The tall building (Block B) has been positioned to the northwest of the Site, allowing the Proposed Development to step up of height away from Castle Street and towards existing taller development to the north.
- 8.47 There would be a visual interaction between the roofline and chimney pots of the west and east sides of the almshouses; however, this interaction builds on the existing condition of intervisibility between the almshouses and the modern civic and commercial development to the north.



Figure 8.2 View 8: Vachel Almshouses – proposed (EB7)

- 8.48 The Proposed Development takes inspiration from local materials and architectural detailing, particularly in Block A which incorporates brickwork detailing. Where there is a visual interaction with the almshouses, the elevations of the Proposed Development would be more sympathetic to the materiality of the almshouses, while maintaining their visual distinction.
- 8.49 As described in **Section 5.0**, the existing building on the Site does not contribute to the special interest of the almshouses. The Proposed Development will bring development closer to the Vachel Almshouses by moving the building line south towards Castle Street. The Castle Street elevation would be articulated to appear as a series of terrace buildings, rather than a single block, reflecting the fine urban grain of the south side road. This would reinstate something of the historic character of thoroughfare, which was historically densely populated with linear development, and the setting of the almshouses.
- 8.50 The setting of the almshouses has undergone extensive change since the 19th century, most notably the comprehensive redevelopment of the areas to the north and south of Castle Street in the late 20th century. The traditional form of the almshouses, where residents are given privacy through the setting back of the homes from the public thoroughfare, ensures that the special interest of the almshouses has been maintained despite change in the environment. This element of the buildings' setting, which contributes to special interest would be maintained through the Proposed Development.
- 8.51 Despite an increase of massing and density on the Site, there would be an overall enhancement to the setting of the Vachel Almshouses, through the removal of an unsympathetic modern intervention and its replacement with a high-quality alternative. The Proposed Development responds positively to the height, scale and materiality of the almshouses, while introducing a more engaging and cohesive ground floor experience (see **Figure 8.2**).

- 8.52 Due to the orientation of the Site and the almshouses on opposite sides of the Castle Street, the Proposed Development would have no impact on the key view of the Vachel Almshouses identified in the StMBCSCA. From this position, the fine Victorian brick work detailing and vernacular architecture of the almshouses can be best appreciated.
- 8.53 The Proposed Development would therefore preserve the special interest of the Grade II almshouses. No harm would arise from the Proposed Development.
- GRADE II LISTED BUILDINGS ALONG CASTLE STREET (WEST) AND CASTLE HILL – MAP REFS. 15, 17, 19, 21, 29, 41**
- 8.54 The Proposed Development would introduce a mixed-use development to the wider setting of the listed buildings in this group, which would be located approximately 150m to the northeast.
- 8.55 View 9 demonstrates the visual interaction between the listed buildings and the Proposed Development. Due to the severance created by the IDR, the full extent of the western elevation of the Proposed Development would be seen across the IDR interchange. Here, the stepped form of the Proposed Development would appear contextual in the context of the lower scale development on Castle Street and increasing in height towards the commercial centre and existing and emerging tall buildings around Broad Street Mall.
- 8.56 While there would be a notable increase in density and scale on the Site, the special interest of the listed buildings, comprising 18th and 19th century dwellings and a public house, is understood in the context of modern development to the east. The urban setting of the buildings in this grouping is reinforced by the proximity of the IDR interchange, which separates the linear historic development from the town centre.
- 8.57 The elements of setting which do contribute to special interest, namely the historic visual and functional association between the individual listed buildings and the RSCHCA, would not be affected. In this context, the Proposed Development would preserve the special interest of the listed buildings by virtue of setting.

KENT HOUSE (GRADE II) AND ROX BOROUGH HOUSE (GRADE II)– MAP REF. 23 AND 31

- 8.58 Due to the position of Kent House and Rox Borough House to the north of the Site, the Proposed Development would principally be experienced as a single tall building of up to 16 storeys.
- 8.59 When observing the fine architectural detailing of Kent House and Rox Borough House, looking west on Howard Street and south on Oxford Street, the Proposed Development would be a peripheral element. The Proposed Development would be visually separated from the listed buildings by the IDR, which cuts through the urban fabric surrounding the listed buildings, clearly conforming to the more urban and modern character of the town centre.
- 8.60 The special interest of the buildings is understood independently of the detracting dual carriageway and modern development beyond. The elements of setting which contribute to the special interest of the listed buildings, specifically their relation to one another and the other historic development within the RSCHCA, would not be affected by the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would therefore preserve the special interest of the listed buildings, resulting in no harm.
- GRADE II LISTED BUILDINGS SURROUNDING READING MINSTER (GRADE II) – MAP REFS. 32, 38, 44 AND 47**
- 8.61 The listed buildings in this group enclose the Grade I Church of St Mary on east, north and south sides, forming the historic square at the core of the medieval market town. The listed buildings in this group are inward facing, orientated towards Reading Minster.
- 8.62 The ZTV indicates that the Proposed Development would be visible along Gun Street, Chain Street and throughout the churchyard. The ZTV does not take into account the heavy tree cover which provides screening within the churchyard and along St Mary's Butts, particularly in the summer months. Nevertheless, Views 3 and 11 demonstrates how the Proposed Development would appear from within the setting of the listed buildings. On Gun Street and Minster Street, the Proposed Development would appear over the roof line of the listed buildings on St Mary's Butts and its stepped form would be appreciable. The lower levels of both blocks would be occluded

- 8.63 The Proposed Development would be read as part of the modern civic and retail development to the north of Castle Street, where there is already a character of large-scale buildings. The visual impact of the buildings is reduced through their separation into two blocks and the distribution of heights across the Site, which helps to reduce the appearance of massing.
- 8.64 While there would be a notably change in scale on the Site, the Proposed Development would be peripheral to the listed buildings in this group, forming a contextual element of the wider urban setting. The historic functional, spatial and visual association between the listed buildings, which contributes to an understanding of the special interest as residential and ecclesiastical buildings of the 19th century, would be unaffected. The Proposed Development would preserve the special interest of the Grade II listed buildings int this grouping and result in no harm.
- GRADE II LISTED BUILDINGS ON BAKER STREET AND RUSSEL STREET (GRADE II) - MAP REFS. 36, 46, 52, 63, 77**
- 8.65 The Proposed Development would appear as a tall building to the east of the listed buildings lining Baker Street. The ZTV indicates that due to the orientation and alignment of Baker Street, as one moves eastwards the upper storeys of Block B would be framed in axial views, appearing over rooflines and through building gaps. Block A would be largely occluded in the setting of the listed buildings.
- 8.66 The separating distance between the Site and the listed buildings would be readily perceptible in these views. The tall building would appear visually distinct from the low-scale 19th century residential building within this group, being read as a coherent feature of the modern skyline of the town centre. The stepped form would reduce the appearance of massing and prevent the Proposed Development from appearing overbearing.
- 8.67 The listed buildings on Russell Street together form a continuous streetscape of early to mid-19th century residential development leading south from Baker Street. This is best appreciated looking north or south on Russell Street, at which point the Proposed Development would be a peripheral feature of the wider urban environment

- 8.68 As one moves along Baker Street to appreciate the special architectural and historic interest of the buildings, the Proposed Development would come in and out of view. In the immediate environment, there would be no change to the historic, functional and visual relationship between the listed buildings and non-designated 19th century housing which surrounds them and contributes to their special interest. The special interest of the listed buildings as fine examples of early to mid-19th century townhouses would be preserved.

94 AND 96 WOLSELEY STREET (GRADE II) - MAP REF. 73

- 8.69 The ZTV indicates that there would be glimpsed views of the Proposed Development in views north on Wolseley Street, within the setting of the listed buildings. Due to the alignment of the road and the position of the large Victorian school at the north end of the road, elements of the Proposed Development would be occluded.
- 8.70 While there would be some visibility of the Proposed Development, this would be over a long distance of approximately 430m. Considering the extent of intervening development, including the IDR, which separates the listed buildings from the town centra where the Proposed Development is located, this would result in a very minor change to the buildings setting. The elements of the buildings setting which contribute to its special interest, principally Wolseley Street itself and the later 19th century workers housing which lines it, would be unaffected by the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would, therefore, preserve the special interest of the Grade II listed 94 and 96 Wolseley Street.

CUMULATIVE

- 8.71 The cumulative schemes set out at **Section 2.o** have been considered in terms of potential effects on the heritage assets within the study area. In terms of potential setting impacts, the most relevant cumulative scheme to the Site is Broad Street Mall (planning ref. PL/24/0173) which received a resolution to grant for three tall buildings of 19, 26 and 30 storeys. This development is within the Minster Quarter. Both Broad Street Mall and the Proposed Development have followed the Minster Quarter Framework in terms of the distribution of massing, collectively stepping up in height to the northwest away from Reading Minster and the StMBCSCA.

- 8.72 In the cumulative scenario, the Proposed Development will be experienced within an urban, town centre location, where tall buildings and high-density development are becoming more commonplace. This is anticipated in the Development Plan, which identifies the Site and wider area as part of the Western Grouping. The addition of the Proposed Development to this context, would give rise to no additional setting impacts on identified heritage assets.

SECTION SUMMARY

- 8.73 The heritage assessment has considered the potential impact of the Proposed Development on the setting of the heritage assets scoped into the assessment. The design of the Proposed Development has been developed to respond to the sensitive heritage context which surrounds the Site. The assessment has concluded that the Proposed Development would preserve the special interest of all the relevant designated heritage assets within the study area. For a number of heritage assets, notably the StMBCSCA and the listed buildings on Castle Street, the Proposed Development would improve the appearance of the Site and reinstate historic townscape characteristics, resulting in an enhancement to their setting.

9.0

ASSESSMENT: TOWNSCAPE

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

ASSESSMENT: TOWNSCAPE

- 9.1 This section assesses the effect of the Proposed Development on the townscape character areas identified in **Section 6.0**.
- 9.2 The DAS, prepared by JTP, provides a detailed discussion on the design rationale and architectural approach of the Proposed Development.
- 9.3 The following assessment applies the methodology outlined in **Section 2.0**, to determine the nature of impact on townscape character and value. The townscape assessment is summarised at **Table 9.1**.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 9.4 We assess the Proposed Development in relation to the key characteristics, set out in the National Design Guide (the 'NDG') in terms of achieving a well-designed place.

CONTEXT

- 9.5 The Site is located within Reading town centre and forms part of Reading's civic quarter, comprising the Magistrates Court to the east and the Hexagon to the north, which were all constructed at around the same time and in a similar architectural style.
- 9.6 The Site abuts Castle Street to the south and the IDR to the west. To the north are the Broad Street Shopping Mall which opened in 1971 and Oxford Road, where individual tall buildings are located.
- 9.7 The extant development plan identifies the Site as being within the West Side Major Opportunity Area (Policy CR12). It is evident that the Site is located within an area where significant change is anticipated. The Minster Quarter Area Outline Development Framework (2018) identifies the area as a significant development opportunity. This context is important in the overall assessment of the Proposed Development.

- 9.8 Since Thames Valley Police vacated the premises on Castle Street in December 2025, the Site has been vacant and therefore constitutes brownfield land with little townscape and amenity value. In addition, the public open space at the rear of the building is underutilised and in need of maintenance.

IDENTITY

- 9.9 The Proposed Development proposes two buildings, a tall element of up to 16 storeys, overlooking the IDR and a U-shape block, addressing Castle Street and a new route through the Site: Flint Street.
- 9.10 Flint Street takes its name from a historic road to the north-east of the Site which was lost during the redevelopment of the late 20th century. Flint Street would become as a new east-to-west pedestrian connection, providing a link between the neighbourhoods to the west of the IDR with the core of the town centre. The Proposed Development would reinstate something of the historic street layout, including repairing the historic building line and creating a sense of enclosure at the west end of Castle Street.
- 9.11 The Proposed Development reads as a family of buildings, each with an independent but cohesive identity comprising different articulation and materiality. The tall building acts as a new gateway into the West Side Major Opportunity Area from the south-west.
- 9.12 The landscaping scheme takes cues from the history of the Site, which was partially occupied by a coachmakers yard in the 19th and early 20th centuries, with the private and public spaces named Coachmakers Gardens and Coachmakers Courtyard.

BUILT FORM

- 9.13 The built form evolved throughout the pre-application process and collaborative engagements with RBC officers and the Design Review Panel, which ensured that the Proposed Development would be fully aligned with the visions of the adjoining Minster Quarter site, which are still emerging.

- 9.14 Block A is formed of three parts: Coachmakers Gardens, Castle Street and Cusden Walk. The Castle Street elevation steps down to four storeys and is articulated to give the impression of a series of terraces rather than a single block. The existing building line south to meet the historic thoroughfare. The building steps up in height on the north corner of Cusden Street (to seven storeys) and Coachmakers Gardens along the IDR (six and 10 storeys). The U-shape block encloses a raised courtyard garden that overlooks Flint Street which is private to residents.
- 9.15 The position of the tall building (Block B) aligns with the height distribution outlined in the Minster Quarter framework, with buildings stepping up in height to the north-west away from Reading Minster and the low scale historic development on Castle Street. As part of these discussions, the height of Block B was reduced from 20 and 14 storeys to 16 and 12 storeys. A chamfered corner was introduced to Block A to create more public realm along the IDR. In addition, the setback along the Castle Street frontage was reduced. Smaller shops rather than a large-scale supermarket now occupy the ground floor, to introduce a finer urban grain to the Site. Shopfronts would activate the wider streetscape both along Castle Street and Flint Street.