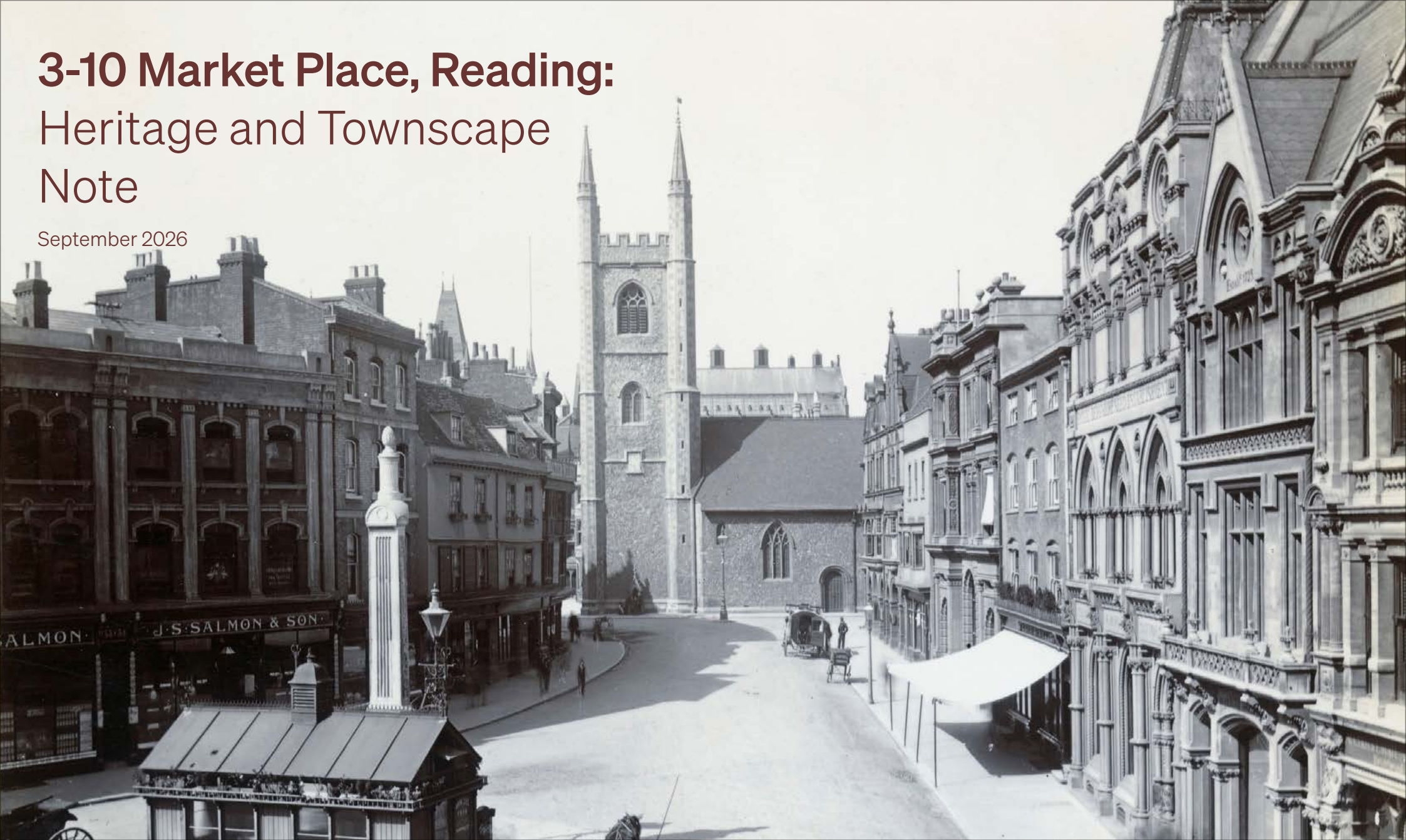


3-10 Market Place, Reading: Heritage and Townscape Note

September 2026



Prepared for: Tene Living Reading Ltd

Prepared by: Levrant

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Introduction

This heritage and townscape note has been prepared to accompany a planning application at the subject site: Soane Point, 3-10 Market Place, Reading. The application seeks to deliver minor works such as the installation of stair and lift overruns and plant on the existing roof of the building, provide amenity space at ground and fourth levels and infill areas of exposed facade. Full details of the proposals are provided in the 'Design Document' by Westworks, accompanying the application.

The minor works are to be delivered alongside Phase 1 of the development approved under full planning permission ref: 221446 granted in August 2023.

This assessment has been prepared by Levrant, a specialist practice of conservation architects, surveyors, planners and heritage consultants which focuses on the historic environment. The authors of this assessment were:

- Vicky Webster, IHBC, MSc Historic Building Conservation, BA (Hons) – Associate Heritage Consultant
- Claire Jackson, MSc Historic Conservation, BA (Hons) – Heritage Consultant

The approved 2023 scheme, granted on 3rd August 2023, was for:

'External works to existing building, including partial replacement of the existing facades fronting Market Place and Abbey Square alongside other external works to the building, set back single-storey extension above part of block fronting Market Place, part two part three storey extensions above other blocks, and conversion and alterations to ground floor reception and car parking area, together the works will deliver 38 new homes and (internal and external) residential amenity areas with associated car parking.'

Phase 1 included, but is not limited to, the delivery of all façade works to the existing building, including those on the main Market Place façade from ground to fourth floor. The Phase 1 works are being delivered alongside internal works to provide 144 homes which were approved under permitted development (PD) rights.

Phase 2 includes the upwards roof extension and conversion of part of the ground floor, providing an additional 38 homes. The developer is unable to proceed with the second phase of development at this time.

Given the proposed minor works are limited and nature in scale, they will not have an adverse effect in heritage and townscape terms. This assessment therefore considers the impact of the delivery of the proposed additional minor works alongside Phase 1 of the 2023 development. The combination of Phase 1 and the additional minor works are referred to as the 'Proposed Scheme' in the remainder of this assessment.

This proposal seeks to obtain planning permission for Phase 1 with minor amendments (without the second phase and roofscape amendments), while leaving the previous application live to potentially complete the second phase at a later date when the project viability / market improves.

A 'Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment for Full Application' prepared by Levrant (formerly Heritage Architecture) was prepared in September 2022 for a full baseline assessment including historic development, character appraisal and significance assessment. This was submitted with the 2022 application (planning ref: PL/22/1446). Given the nature of the proposals, the same viewpoints have been used within the impact assessment, the AVRs have been updated where relevant (reflecting the change to the heritage, townscape or visual impact).

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Location and Context

The site is located towards the northern end of Market Place / London Street Conservation Area (CA) at the threshold of the Jackson's Corner, and Market Place Character Areas. Market Place is triangular in form, with built form fronting the public realm on all sides. To the north of Market Place is the Church of St Laurence and Town Hall Square and to the west of the Market Place area, lies the commercial heart of modern Reading. The Forbury Square area has been developed in recent years as a large-scale office quarter. The Abbey precinct lies outside and to the east of the study site, with Abbey Square within the precinct to its immediate east and rear.

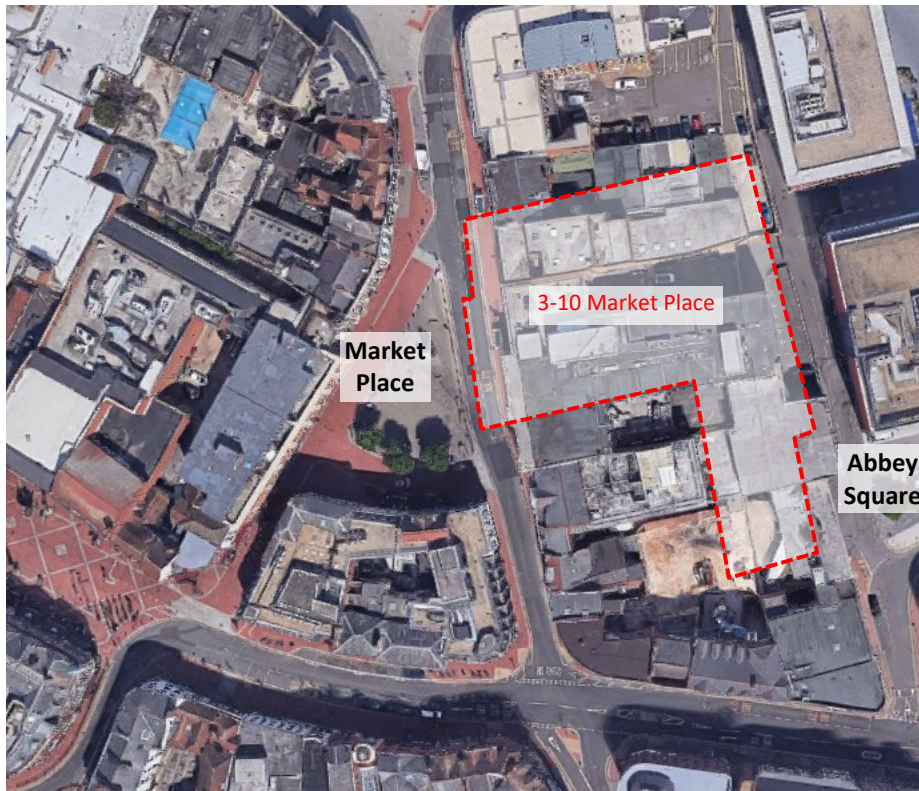


Figure 1: Aerial photograph of the site showing its relationship to Abbey Square and Market Place to the east and west.



Figure 2 Front elevation facing the Market Place, 2021

Designations

The subject site is unlisted and is not considered to be a Non-Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA). There is a high concentration of listed buildings around the study site, particularly focussed - as one might expect - around Market Place these include:

- 7 High Street (Grade II) – list no: 1155910
- 8 High Street (Grade II) – list no: 1113493
- 1 and 2 Market Place (Grade II) – list no: 1156257
- 13-16 Market Place (Grade II) – list no: 1113535
- 23-26 Market Place (Grade II) – list no: 1113536
- 27 and 28 Market Place (Grade II) – list no: 1302967
- The Coopers Public House (Grade II) – list no: 1113537
- 32 Market Place (Grade II) – list no: 1156271
- 33-34 Market Place (Grade II) – list no: 1113538
- Corn Exchange Arcade Entrance (Grade II) – list no: 1113539
- 48 and 49 Market Place (Grade II) – list no: 1156281
- 50 and 51 Market Place (Grade II) – list no: 1113540

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- 52 Market Place, 10 High Street (Grade II)

The most sensitive heritage assets relevant to this application are the Grade II* listed Simeon Monument (list no: 1113534), The Church of St Laurence (Grade I) with attached drinking fountain (Grade II).

The Market Place/ London Street Conservation Area was designated in 1972 and extended in 1982. The subject site is located within the northern part of the CA at the boundary of the Market Place (4) and Jackson's Corner (3) character areas.



Figure 3: Map showing the listed buildings located on Market Place and the vicinity of the subject site (source: Historic England).

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Figure 4: Market Place/ London Street Conservation Area Map – the site boundary is indicated in red (source: Reading Borough Council).

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Legislation and Policy

This document was carried out considering up-to-date national and local policy, including:

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2026)
- National Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) (2024)
- Conservation principles, policies and guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment, English Heritage, April 2008
- Good Practice Advice in Planning, Historic England (GPAs):
 - Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (December 2017)
- Advice Notes, Historic England (HEANs)
 - Note 12 - Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets (October 2019)
- Reading Borough Council Local Plan (November 2019) N.B. A Local Plan Partial Update was submitted to the Secretary of State on 9th May 2025.
- The Conservation Studio, Market Place/ London Street Conservation Area Appraisal (undated)

Summary of Heritage and Townscape Character and Significance

Summary of Townscape Character

TCA 1: Market Place

According to Reading Borough Council's Character Appraisal the overall spatial character of the northern part of the CA is described as:

'...generally speaking, a tightly knit urban area composed of continuous frontages of two-, three- and four-storey buildings beside streets of varying length and width. Close to St Laurence's Church there is a wide part-pedestrianised area that includes the triangular site of Market Place and an adjoining paved area around the statue of Queen Victoria known as Town Hall Square. This open space, based on the medieval market place and forecourt of a former gateway to the Abbey, provides a good setting for the area's historic buildings especially St Laurence's Church, the Town Hall and a row of listed buildings (nos. 23 to 34) on the north-east of Market Place.'

Furthermore, it is worth noting the following points extracted from the appraisal:

- *The northern part of the Conservation Area is centred around the medieval market square and the Town Hall. This area acts as the terminus for the historic route following today's London Street, Duke Street and High Street. Although no longer a significant north-south route, the linear course and triangular open space remain.*
- *Storey heights across the Conservation Area generally range from 2-4 storeys, with the higher buildings located close to the town centre in Market Place and Blagrove Street. London Street to the south is generally less dense than the tight urban form to the north.*

Levrant generally agrees with this overall description but note that the building is six-storeys tall to the rear and that several other plots (including Jacksons Corner directly to the south) have buildings which rise above four-storeys in height.

The historic and contemporary townscape character of Market Place is of polite, three-to-four storey buildings facing onto the public space. The square has a mixed character of historic and modern buildings fronting the triangular open space, many replaced in the mid-late 20th century.

Though the height of the building prior to development reflects that of its immediate townscape character, the scale and materials are at odds with the rest of the built form on Market Place. The continuous built form along the eastern edge of the Market Place, with ground floor commercial units, provides a strong building line and active frontages within the square.

There is an emerging townscape context to the west of Market Place with the forthcoming piecemeal development of the Bristol and West Arcade, and the proposals to convert and extend 11-12 Market Place, which are partially underway.

The townscape value to this character area, centred on the busy node of Market Place, is **Medium-High**.

TCA 2: Forbury and Abbey Square

The sense of place and the character of the built environment beyond Market Place changes to that of a large-scale commercial landscape, with taller, large-footprint buildings. Immediately to the east of the site, just outside of the

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Conservation Area boundary, but affecting its setting, is the seven-storey Forbury Square development. The built form is generally larger, less homogenous, and undistinguished modern development.

The townscape value to this area, centred on both Abbey and Forbury Square, is **Low-Medium**.

TCA 3: London Street

London Street is located to the south, across the River Kennet. It is physically divided from the Market Place to the north by both the river, and a large dual carriage way (Queens Road, A329). It has a different character to that of the Market Place and the more recent development on the squares, in that it is a linear street, with largely historic properties situated on either side. There is variety of scale, heights, form, architectural treatment within the built form, creating townscape interest.

As such, the townscape value of this area, along London Street, is **Medium-High**.

Summary of Significance

Market Place/ London Street Conservation Area

The Conservation Area is afforded special interest owing to:

- The linear area along the planned medieval southern approach over the River Kennet to a marketplace and church outside one of Reading Abbey's gateways;
- The extension of the High Street along London Street to facilitate trade to and from London;
- The numerous designated heritage assets including the landmark medieval St. Laurence's Church (Grade I), some isolated 16th and 17th century timber-framed buildings, and further groups of historic buildings around Market Place;
- The layout, legibility of burgage plots, and variety in the built form and plot widths lining the edge of the medieval, triangular Market Place, and evidence of infill development;
- The scale and articulation of the 19th century rebuilding instigated by the

industrialisation and growth of the town;

- The architecturally fine examples of 19th century banks and commercial buildings (inc. NatWest Bank) on Market Place;
- The building stock includes many examples of buildings constructed with bricks from Reading's extensive local brickworks (red, blue and buff);
- The area houses two 19th century monuments: Sir John Soane's Simeon Monument in Market Place and the statue of Queen Victoria near the town hall.

Architectural landmarks such as St Laurence's Church, the Town Hall buildings, the Market Place and Simeon Monument are considered to positively contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area, as to do the other designated heritage assets. The examples of modern architecture on Market Place, including the subject site, are monolithic, being too large in scale, form and massing for their otherwise eclectic historic market setting. These properties detract from the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Overall, the Conservation Area is considered to be of **medium** significance.

Church of St Laurence (Grade I) and Drinking fountain (Grade II)

The Church of St Laurence was one of three churches in Reading, built to serve those living on the eastern side of the town. Its location, by the Abbey gate, helped stimulate trade and the development of the Market Place. Originally Norman, it has undergone multiple phases of rebuilding, including its 15th century tower and an extensive restoration in the mid-19th century. These multiple architectural phases and styles contribute to its architectural and historic interest. It is of high cultural and communal interest, as a continuous place of Christian worship since the Norman period.

The drinking fountain, dates from 1860, and was designed by William Ford Poulton and William Henry Woodman. It is considered a well-crafted example of a drinking fountain at the time, which contributes to the architectural interest of the southern elevation of the church. Its implementation followed an attempt to provide safe drinking water to the town which is of historic interest.

Overall, the church is considered to be of **very high** significance, while the drinking fountain is of **medium** significance.

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The Simeon Monument (Grade II*)

This monument occupies a prominent location in Market Place, dating from 1804 and was designed by Sir John Soane at the commission of Edward Simeon. It is afforded architectural interest as a fine example of a Georgian public monument designed by an exceptionally well-renowned architect. Simeon was a local self-made, successful banker who privately funded this architectural centrepiece to improve lighting in the square - this contributes to its historic interest.

As such, the Simeon Monument is considered to be of **high** significance.

7, 8 High Street (Grade II)

Both listed buildings are historic shops on the High Street. While No. 7 dates from the early-19th century, No. 8 was constructed in 1904 to the design of architect William Roland Howell. No. 7 is in the Italianate style, utilising stucco and classical motifs – its front elevation forms a key part of its architectural interest. No.8 has a richly ornate Art Nouveau exterior with a ground floor shopfront and large first floor fanlight surrounded by green faience tiles - which is also of architectural interest. Together, the properties are of a similar height, scale, and use, exhibiting group value within the historic town centre. They both highlight the urban development of the High Street, and also its reconstruction throughout the 19th and 20th centuries which affords the properties with both historic and communal interest as local, neighbourhood shops.

Both 7 and 8 High Street are considered to be of **medium-high** significance.

1 and 2, 13-16 and 50-51 Market Place (Grade II)

All three of these properties were former banks dating from the 1870s and 1900. Nos. 1-2 was designed for Stephens Blandy and Co Bankers though it was formerly taken over by Lloyds banking house in 1899. Nos. 13-16 were instead designed by local architect Frederick William Albury of Albury and Brown. Like Nos.1-2, this building was taken over in the 1920s by the bank which came to be known as NatWest. Each association affords these listed buildings with historic interest. Architecturally, both feature classical proportions and embellishments, and Nos. 13-16 has an Italianate design. They have a rusticated ground floor and prominent entrance, fitting of a bank and grand commercial building in the town – both are of medium-high architectural interest. 50 and 51 was also a former bank, and like the other aforementioned banks, exhibits a grandeur in its architectural treatment. It is a Flemish style building, with a Flemish gable,

ground floor granite façade and ashlar upper storeys which is of architectural interest. The internal connections between this building and 3-5 King Street are of historic interest, both buildings sharing a function.

1 and 2, 13-16 and 50-51 Market Place are considered to be of **medium-high** significance.

23-26, 32, 33-34 Market Place and Corn Exchange Arcade Entrance (Grade II)

Together these properties form the gently curved north western side of the Market Place, where it transitions into Town Hall Square. This curved façade, with its giant pilasters, classical sash windows topped with hooded architraves contribute to its architectural interest. Each property dates from the mid- to late-19th century, alluding to the prosperity of the area at this time. While 23-26 Market Place can be attributed to the work of Henry Briant and Nathaniel Briant and the Corn Exchange Arcade Entrance to John Berry Clacy and F Hawkes, the architects of the other properties in this group are unknown. The use of the ground floor shop at Nos.33-34 as a merchant tea house by J S Salmon & Son is of historic interest. The arcade entrance has a different character, featuring ashlar stone, a belfry tower and clock which provides interest to the group. 32 Market Place is noted as being listed for group value only.

As such, except for 32 Market Place which is considered to be of **medium** significance, 23-26, 33-34 and the Corn Exchange Arcade Entrance are considered to be of **medium-high** significance owing to their architectural and historic interest.

27 and 28 Market Place and The Coopers Public House (Grade II)

Both properties are timber framed and some of the older buildings on the Market Place dating from the 17th century. The timber framing to the façade of the pub is false with stucco infill. 27 and 28 features jettying on both the first and second floors as well as canted bay windows and dormer windows in the attic. Given the age of both properties, they have been altered periodically between the 17th and 20th centuries with new shopfronts and extensions, which make various contributions to their architectural and historic interest. Owing to their similarities in appearance, and the age of the properties, they exhibit strong group value.

27 and 28 Market Place and The Coopers Public House are considered to be of **high** significance.

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48 and 49 and 52 Market Place (Grade II)

Both buildings were built as commercial terraces, with a shop and flats/ offices above. They date from the 18th century to the turn of the 19th century. 52 Market Place was first used as a rubber shop – the older section of the building fronts Market Place. The property has since been amalgamated with other surrounding properties i.e. 10 High Street and 1-5 King Street. Its neoclassical front elevation is of architectural interest, with a strong cornice and ionic pilasters, and a decorative ground floor shopfront. 48 and 49 Market Place was built in the mid-18th century, it features a stucco façade, with large entrance with fanlight and central key stone, and classical proportions. Its ground floor rustication was added in the 20th century. This building

Both buildings have been altered externally and internally, and as such, they are considered to be of **medium** significance.

Contribution of the subject site to the Conservation Area and setting of listed buildings on Market Place

The subject site is experienced on the eastern side of the Market Place either situated between listed buildings in the same row or within the same former market setting. The listed buildings line the edge of this public open space on three sides. The variety in their built form creates a varied historic streetscape that adds visual interest to the square. Each listed buildings line contributes to the others setting, preserving the historic character of the area.

The subject site is much larger in scale, its monolithic scale having obliterated the fine grain of its former burgrave plots. Its previous monotonous modular concrete façade was visually jarring next to the more polite neighbouring properties. Having undergone partial conversion under the approved 2023 scheme despite its scale, the subject site is considered to make a **neutral to positive contribution** to the setting of listed buildings on Market Place and the northern end of the High Street.

Proposals

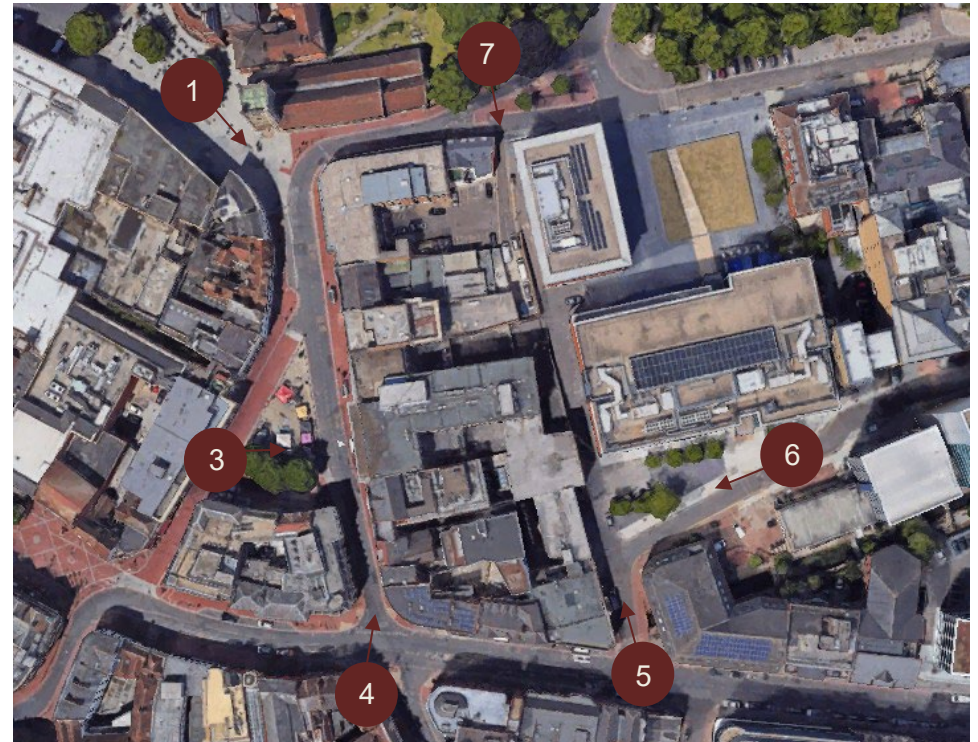
The minor works include the following:

- Installation of plant, smoke shafts, AOV's, stair and lift-overruns, smoke shafts, and PV panels on the existing roof (fourth floor);
- Provision of external amenity spaces at ground and fourth floors;

- Completion of areas of exposed façade in materials to match those already approved / existing façades.

Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment

The site contains no statutory or locally listed buildings but lies within the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area and within the setting of several Grade I, II* and II listed buildings and structures. This assessment draws on the 'Westworks Design Document: Full Application' and considers the effects of the Proposed Scheme (Phase 1 + minor works) on the Conservation Area, nearby listed buildings and the wider townscape. It assesses the assets and their settings in the round, including intervisibility, views to and from them, historic associations and their relationship with the surrounding townscape. Four representative visuals - Views 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 - compare the 2023 scheme with the proposed scheme. These views show the relevant elevations, including those facing Market Place, and have largely been retaken to match the agreed views submitted with the original application (ref: PL/22/1446). There are a few exceptions to account for intervening vegetation, see the visualiser's methodology statement is appended to this report.



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Please note that the as consented views have been reused in this assessment, however, there have been minor changes to the colour palette, which were approved in 2023 (ref: PL/23/1790 and PL/23/1807) – see the image below.



Figure 5 Approved colour palette (ref: PL/23/1790 and PL/23/1807)

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View 1 (As Consented)



View 1 (As Proposed)



Commentary

Commentary on the 2023 scheme is set out in *italics*, with the proposed scheme discussed below. Where 'existing building' is referred to, this relates to the building prior to its redevelopment. The colours represented in the 'as consented' visuals do not reflect the final colour palette, which was approved in 2023.

The proposed development is seen in the background. The articulation of its façade breaks down the dominant horizontality of the existing building by introducing a façade expressed as four separate blocks with individual albeit related detailing. This emphasis on verticality is carried forward to the roof, with individual blocks being expressed independently, further enhancing the visual interest of the roofscape, and taking reference from the historic roof form in the area.

Although the proposals would involve some additional massing and height, this is generally well detailed; and in this view, the proposed development does not appear visually dominant. The additional massing at fourth floor level is recessed; and the floors above (fifth and sixth floors) are significantly set back from street level and not visible in this view. The proposed development serves to better integrate the building into the varied streetscape along Market Place and reflect the finer grain of the surrounding conservation area context.

Overall, the proposed development, as seen in this view, is a significant enhancement over the existing building and better responds to the immediate streetscene and wider townscape. It also provides a demonstrable enhancement to the settings of listed buildings in Market Place, including the Grade II Nos. 23-26 and National Westminster Bank and the Grade I St Laurence Church, as well as other buildings within the local streetscape.

Overall, the impact of the proposed development on this view is beneficial.

The completed Phase 1 + additional minor works would result in the incorporation of the stair and lift overrun at existing roof level; these elements would be clad in dark grey with standing seam detail. Black metal railings (fronting amenity space at fourth floor, Bay 2) and a setback smoke extract system are proposed – they would be unobtrusive or not readily perceptible. The considerable improvements mentioned above would be delivered, in terms of breaking the massing of the building down into four 'burgage plots', and the use of varied but appropriate materials. However, the massing of the building is more akin to the pre-existing height, limiting the visual change. The other minor revisions to the roofscape would not be discernible in this view. Overall, the scheme would continue to have a **beneficial effect**.

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View 3 (As Consented)



View 3 (As Proposed)



Commentary

The colours represented in the 'as consented' visuals do not reflect the final colour palette, which was approved in 2023.

The proposed principal elevation, fronting on to Market Place, shows a significant improvement over the existing elevation. Drawing from the historic burgage plots on this site, it divides the existing building into four separately detailed blocks- breaking up the horizontal massing and introducing much needed verticality. This is expressed through the careful use of materials, reflecting other buildings within the square and the wider conservation area character.

The standard and repetitive fenestration design of the existing building has been broken down by providing different window heights, reflecting the hierarchy of fenestration in a traditional building. Differentiation between individual blocks – despite the reuse of the structural grid on elevations of three blocks - has been successfully given a greater level of visual interest through the expression of depth and shadows. This gives added expression of solidity depth and strength.

The street interface is improved by the replacement of the pilotis like slender columns with more substantial columns clad in stone, providing a fitting base for the buildings. The shopfronts are expressed through the openings within this colonnade, reflecting other examples within Market Square.

The design of the roofline reflects the variation in height and materiality historically seen in Market Place and follows on the verticality of the scheme at lower floors.

As seen in this view, the upper storeys (set back from the street elevation) are not perceived. The general continuity of the parapet line (with slight variations to reflect the four individual blocks) is in keeping with the general character of Market Place. Overall, the impact of the proposed development on this view is enhancing and beneficial.

The **proposed scheme** would retain the principal design features of the 2023 scheme. In this view, the subdivision of the building into four 'burgage plots' and the varied, contextually appropriate materials would maintain its relationship with the character of Market Place. Retaining the pre-existing building's height would limit the degree of visual change compared with the 2023 scheme. The stair and lift overrun would remain at existing roof level and would be clad in dark grey with standing-seam detailing. Black metal railings to the fourth-floor amenity space at Bay 2 and the set-back smoke extract system would be unobtrusive or not readily perceptible. The approved material palette and vertical emphasis would be retained. Overall, the scheme would continue to have a **beneficial effect**.

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View 4 (As Consented)



View 4 (As Proposed)



Commentary

The colours represented in the 'as consented' visuals do not reflect the final colour palette, which was approved in 2023.

The proposed development is seen to the right centre-ground and in its overall massing appears similar to the existing building. However, minor changes to the design such as the introduction of a base to the building through stone clad columns, and grey brick cladding are perceived. The set back upper storeys are not perceived in this view and will not be visible from King Street or Jackson's Corner.

The interface with the street level is better detailed and is more contextually appropriate than the existing building's design. The stone clad ground floor, forming a plinth to the upper brick faced elevations, reflects a number of similar buildings in the wider area and adds visual strength and rationality.

Given the visual separation of this part of the site from the conservation area and listed buildings on Market Place, the proposed development has no adverse impact on the character and appearance of these heritage assets when seen in this view and so the overall impact is considered to be beneficial in heritage terms.

The proposed scheme would continue to bring the improvements mentioned above. The reduced massing of this proposal is not discernible in this particular view. Balustrades were discernible on the roof of the consented proposal and remains visible on the new proposal. Overall, this particular view would remain unchanged, and the scheme would continue to have a **beneficial effect**.

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View 5 (As Consented)



View 5 (As Proposed)



Commentary

The colours represented in the 'as consented' visuals do not reflect the final colour palette, which was approved in 2023.

The proposed development, as seen in this view, incorporates greater height and massing as compared to the existing building. This provides a more meaningful urban context and balances better with the contemporary building immediately opposite creating an almost gateway form. This also reflects the changing character of Abbey Square, which includes taller buildings and a palette of contemporary materials.

The proposed development is seen as part of this wider development in the background of this view and is consequently read and understood as forming part of this taller, commercial context to the east of the site. The scale of this element of the site is contrasted with the low scale traditional buildings in the foreground of the view although it is not considered that the change the visual experience of the streetscape or introduce any sense of overbearing. The scale of the new building and the enhanced verticality provide a visually interesting feature, without being overbearing or dominant.

Overall, the proposed development would have an enhancing impact on this view and would not change how heritage assets in the setting of the site are understood and appreciated.

The **proposed scheme** would retain the pre-existing building's four-storey height, maintaining its established relationship with the rear of Market Place and King's Road while mediating between these buildings and the taller Davidson House. Retention of the pre-existing height would limit the degree of visual change compared with the 2023 scheme. The omission of one strip of windows would resolve the junction with the lower grey-clad block, where the windows were previously positioned close to the junction. As this is a limited change at the edge of the elevation, it would not alter the building's overall fenestration pattern, architectural hierarchy or relationship with the surrounding townscape and is therefore immaterial to the assessment. A small portion of the lift overrun would be visible above the sand-toned block but would read as a typical rooftop volume rather than visual clutter. Overall, the scheme would continue to have a **beneficial effect**.

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View 6 (As Consented)



View 6 (As Proposed)



Commentary

The colours represented in the 'as consented' visuals do not reflect the final colour palette, which was approved in 2023.

The proposed development as seen in this view, responds to the existing and emerging character of Abbey Square. It has a relatively taller massing and uses a more limited palette of materials as compared with the front (Market Place) elevation but is of a similar height and massing, as compared with the Davidson House, to the right. The massing steps down from the tallest element to the south, creating a comfortable transition down to the neighbouring three storey building on Abbey Square.

At street level, the proposals aim to enhance the street frontage through the creation of openings, and introduction of an artwork installation (in the form of a metal gate), improving the existing scenario and creating visual interest at street level.

The block seen to the right (partly screened by Davidson House), is clad in a pale stock brick, which differentiates it from the adjacent grey brick clad block. The design and detail of fenestration used is also diverse, to reflect and divide up the existing large footprint into smaller, well-articulated blocks. At the south end (to the left), the row of fenestration is terminated by a solid termination and provides a bookend to this development. The parapet heights gradually drop from north to south, reflecting and responding to the built form, and massing along Abbey Square (to the north and east) and Kings Road and Jackson's Corner (to the south). The injection of residential uses to this part of the site and the increased level of fenestration and a more legible street entrance has the effect of creating natural surveillance which will improve the experience of the visual receptor as they move around the environs of the site. The enhancement over the existing is highly apparent and what is presently a somewhat neglected area is imbued with a sense of place, which sets an exemplar for further streetscape improvements.

*Overall, the proposed development has a **beneficial** impact on this view and would not change how heritage assets in the setting of the site are understood and appreciated.*

The **proposed scheme** would continue to improve the building's character through a more appropriate and varied material palette, breaking down its massing across the different planes and volumes. The street-facing block would remain at the four-storey height of the pre-existing building, relating more closely to the rear of the Market Place, mediating between it and Davidson House and limiting the degree of visual change when compared with the 2023 scheme. This would allow greater visibility of the largely blind, cream-clad taller volumes behind and would be very slightly less positive in comparison with the 2023 scheme (neutral when compared to the pre-existing building). The lift overrun, PV panels and other rooftop proposals would not be discernible in this view. Overall, the proposals would continue to have a **positive impact**.

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View 7 (As Consented)



View 7 (As Proposed)



Commentary

The colours represented in the 'as consented' visuals do not reflect the final colour palette, which was approved in 2023.

The proposed development appears within the gap of the streetscape of The Forbury, enclosing the existing break in the townscape to a certain degree. The scheme is expressed as a series of related parts, giving the impression of a number of individual building elements that share a design and architectural language. This serves to break down the visual massing of the proposed development within the view and provide interest and a sense of depth in the background.

The scale and massing of the proposed development sits comfortably within the height datum established by The Forbury streetscape and as such it is experienced as a background feature, and peripheral to the receptor's experience of their immediate environment within the churchyard. An area of plant at roof level is seen to rise above the roof of No. 12 The Forbury, although it has a simple form and is articulated in a light materiality which means that it is not overtly noticeable and does not detract from the streetscape in the middle-ground of the view.

The materiality and fenestration design and pattern of the proposed development reflects the traditional and traditionally informed architecture along The Forbury and as a result integrates successfully into the visible townscape.

The development's visual integration means that it is largely peripheral to an experience of the historic churchyard and appreciation of listed monuments and the church itself. As a result, the overall impact is judged to be enhancing and beneficial.

The **newly proposed scheme** would continue to improve the building's character through a more appropriate and varied material palette, breaking down its massing across the different planes and volumes. The height of the former 1960s building would be retained – the two blocks (one at four storeys and the other at five). The rooftop proposals including the lift overrun, PV panels, air conditioning units and smoke extract system would not be discernible in this view. Overall, the proposals would continue to have a **positive impact**.

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Summary of Visual Impact

As demonstrated across Views 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, the proposed scheme (Phase 1 + minor works) would retain the principal visual improvements of the 2023 scheme. The varied, contextually appropriate material palette and articulation of the elevations would break down the building’s massing, reinforce the historic plot rhythm and improve its relationship with the Market Place, Abbey Square and the surrounding townscape. With Phase 2 unable to be delivered at this time, existing building heights will be maintained which would generally limit visual effects and maintain the transition between lower historic buildings and taller modern development. Although the greater visibility of the largely blind, cream-clad taller volumes in View 6 would be very slightly less positive than the 2023 scheme, this would not outweigh the wider improvements. Overall, the proposals would have a **positive visual impact**.

Summary of Townscape Impact

Townscape Character Area	Townscape Value	Representative View(s)	Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Townscape Impact
TCA1: Market Place	Medium-high	1, 3, 4, 7	Medium-high	Major Positive
TCA2: Forbury and Abbey Square	Low-medium	5, 6	Low-medium	Moderate Positive
TCA3: London Street	Medium-high	5	Low	Moderate Positive

Summary of Heritage Impact

As demonstrated in the visual impact assessment, the proposed minor works to be delivered alongside Phase 1 of the approved development would result in a series of generally beneficial effects on selected views in the local and wider townscape surrounding the site and on the setting of heritage assets.

The proposed scheme would retain all the beneficial effects of the 2023 scheme. The improved principal elevation to Market Place would continue to provide a highly articulated and complementary response to the traditional buildings enclosing the square. Its subdivision into distinct components would reflect the grain and pattern of development within the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area, replacing the building’s previous horizontal emphasis with a vertical rhythm informed by the medieval burgage plots and neighbouring listed buildings. With Phase 2 unable to be delivered at this time, existing building heights will be maintained. This would result in a reduced visual effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area and the settings of the listed buildings, specifically those clustered around the Market Place, those on the west side of the Market Place, 1&2, 13-16, 48-52 Market Place and 10 High Street (all Grade II) and the Simeon Monument (Grade II*). Overall, the minor works alongside the completed Phase 1 would have a slightly improved effect on these assets, remaining **moderate positive**.

As mentioned, the areas to the rear of the site are of lower significance in heritage terms. The views which represent this area (5, 6) show the key changes to the scheme and that without Phase 2, the completed Phase 1 development would slightly reduce the visual impact when compared with the previous scheme, whilst continuing to deliver the visual improvements in terms of improved materials and fenestration. The rooftop plant / overruns would not be discernible in these views. The effect of these changes on the character and appearance of the conservation area would continue to be beneficial. Whilst there is one less positive element in townscape terms when compared with the 2023 scheme, the change in comparison with a pre-existing building would remain positive and the sensitivity of this area in heritage terms is very limited and the settings of the listed buildings would not be affected. Therefore, this would result in a neutral effect on the settings of 1&2 and 13-16 Market Place (Grade II).

Considering assets slightly further afield and the character of the northern part of the conservation area, the longer distance views of the site, namely

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represented in View 7, show that the revisions to the scheme would reduce its scale and would essentially retain the status quo in height terms, whilst still delivering the benefits of improving the materials – ensuring that the development complements the character of the conservation area, and improved the settings of the relevant listed buildings, in this case the church of St Laurence (Grade I), and its protected graveyard monuments.

Policy Assessment and Conclusion

The proposed scheme would preserve the settings of the nearby listed buildings, particularly those around the Market Place and the Church of St Laurence (Grade I) and would preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. The amendments therefore satisfy the statutory duties under sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The proposed amendments would accord with the National Planning Policy Framework (2026) and the relevant policies of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019). The proposed scheme would retain the approved design approach and material palette while responding to market viability, detailed requirements including fire safety, adequate servicing and amenity. The proposals would continue to enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and preserve the settings of nearby listed buildings and maintaining the pre-existing building height would better preserve the character of the Market Place (within the Conservation Area) and the settings of the various heritage assets. This positive effect accords with Policy EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan and the heritage assessment and decision-making provisions of the NPPF (2026), including HE5(2), HE6(2) and HE9. The proposals would also enable the retrofit-first approach to this site – in the adaptive reuse of the 1960s structure, which aligns with the new climate mitigation policies within the NPPF (Policy CC2).

In summary, the proposed scheme would satisfy the statutory duties under sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and accord with the relevant provisions of the NPPF (2026) and Policy EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019). They would sustain the positive heritage and townscape effects of the consented scheme, preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area, and preserve the settings of nearby listed buildings.

