

# Station Hill South Planning and Urban Design Brief

Planning Section, Planning & Transport,
Director of Environment, Culture & Sport,
Reading Borough Council,
Civic Centre,
Reading RG1 7TD
Tel: 0800 626540

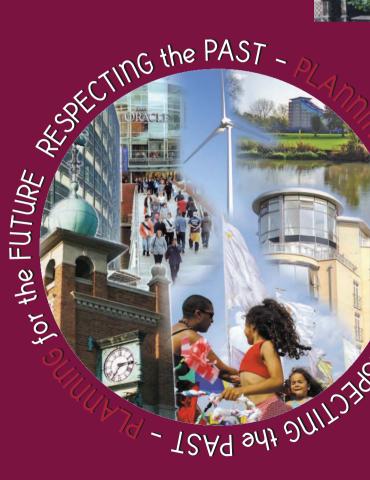
Email: planning.info@reading.gov.uk www.reading.gov.uk

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This document has been prepared to provide specific urban design and planning principles for the Station Hill South area of Reading City Centre. The Council acknowledges the heightened developer interest in the area, and the landmark and gateway location of the site.

The document is linked to the current Reading Borough Local Plan (1998), 2nd Local Transport Plan and Berkshire Structure Plan (2005). The document also considers the emerging Local Development Framework and has been developed in accordance with PPS12 (Local Development Frameworks). This document will provide a statutory planning framework for the determination of planning applications in the Station Hill South area. A Sustainability Appraisal has informed this Brief. Both documents were approved at the Council's Cabinet meeting on 4 December 2006.

## Document Structure

The SPD has been set up in two parts. Part 1 sets out the development principles that have been derived from extensive contextual analysis, consultation workshops and best practice review. Part 2, sets out, as appendices, the considerable evidence base that supports this work, and includes details on contextual studies, consultation feedback, and a review of relevant planning policy. Transport policies relevant to this brief are covered in the 2nd Local Transport Plan (LTP) to be published on March 31st 2006.

Design and planning principles have been categorised into those that will be essential in new development, and those whose inclusion in applications is desirable.

The vision for the study area is one of a thriving, safe and high quality landmark development, with tall buildings at strategic gateways, which frame a network of public open spaces. It is hoped that Station Hill South will become a place that is popular to work, live and spend time in. Development principles have been established that allow for a significant quantum of new development that will enhance the key routes between the Station and the retail core and which integrates the study area into future development and transport aspirations for the renewal of the station and development north of the city centre.





## Station Hill South

The Station Hill South study area is identified below. The study area is acknowledged as a gateway between the station and the rest of the city centre.

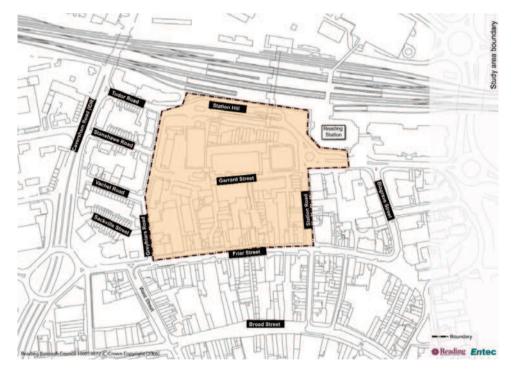


Figure 1.1 Study Area Boundary.

## Purpose

This Planning and Urban Design Brief (the brief) sets out development principles that will form a material consideration in the determination of any planning application for development within the study area boundary.

The objective of the document is to provide a framework for development, rather than setting out detailed policy requirements. The SPD therefore seeks to:

- Offer guidance as to what form of development is acceptable at Station Hill South;
- Provide clarity as to what is not acceptable in planning policy terms;
- Allow for investor and community certainty through a flexible set of principles, linked to a requirement for specific design codes in critical areas.

The document achieves this by defining principles that are either **essential** or **desirable** to the future success of this area.

The brief will be adopted by Reading Borough Council, as SPD following consideration of the representations received on this consultation draft and any subsequent amendments of this brief.

A Sustainability Appraisal (S.A.) of this brief has been developed that has informed the evolution of design principles and development standards for the study area. Consultation on the S.A. has been launched to coincide with the brief and both documents should be considered as a whole.







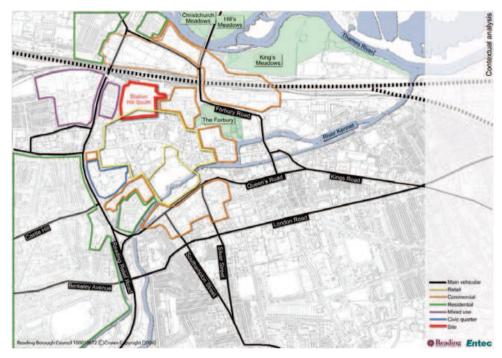


Figure 1.2 Location Plan

## Planning Policy

Much of the study area is an allocated site under policy CEN13, C7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan. Details of the allocation are set out in Appendix 2, Planning Policy Context. This policy states that no net gain in floorspace will be acceptable for new development. Therefore the likelihood is that major proposals with high levels of additional floorspace, in line with those currently being discussed for the area, will be considered as a departure from the Development Plan and subsequently referred to the Secretary of State.

To deliver 'The Vision' (outlined in figure 1.5 on page 6), ten key principles have been developed that relate to the themes identified through contextual analysis and the consultation exercises. These design principles also accord with those set out in "By Design - Urban Design in the Planning System" and more recent (2005) ODPM Guidance on "Planning for Town Centres: Guidance on Design and Implementation Tools", published in support of "PPS6 (Planning for City Centres)", as well as CABE and English Heritage's "Guidance for Tall buildings".

## Context

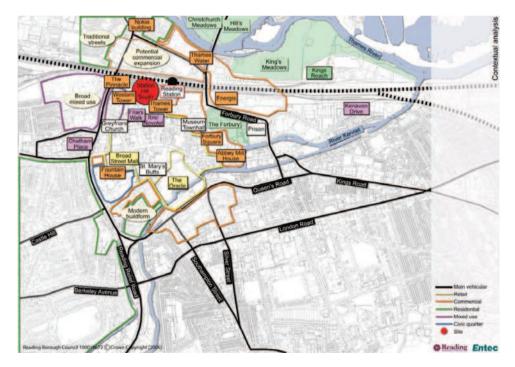


Figure 1.3 Contextual Analysis







A full appraisal of local and wider strategic visual context appears in Appendix 3. This information has been used to formulate principles that will guide development, and which will ensure that it fits appropriately within its context.

The City Centre Management Board and the Borough Council, along with the Local Strategic Partnership, have adopted a City Centre Strategy, which has five main themes:

- A thriving city centre
- · City centre accessibility
- · A socially inclusive city centre
- A quality environment and a safe city centre
- Development and expansion

The Council has identified the station and interchange area as one of its top corporate priorities. This brief acknowledges this and sets out the transport requirements for the area to ensure its delivery. Transport policy documents are referred to in this brief and can be provided separately if required.

As one of the major gateways into Reading Centre from the railway, the study area provides a key opportunity to deliver urban renaissance in the centre. It sits within the area considered by the 2002 Station Area Development Framework and occupies a key location that provides an opportunity to improve linkages between the city centre and the area north of the River Thames. The study area forms a point of arrival for many visitors to Reading.

There is variation in scale and quality across the study area with building heights ranging from 2 to 15 storeys, with one 22 storey tower consented. There is also a level change of approximately 5m across the site.

Friar Street, on the southern boundary of the study area comprises a mix of primary and secondary retailing, with some value outlets and a concentration of pubs/bars/restaurants and coffee bars. A new mixed-use development on the site of the former ABC Cinema and Boar's Head public house is under construction although prevailing character remains 3/4 storeys.

Station Road and Station Hill are characterised by secondary uses which include service industries (banks and employment agencies) as well as several cafés and vacant units.

Elsewhere within the study area there is an under occupation of office development.

The tallest buildings in Reading are located within the study area and these already have local landmark status when the city centre is viewed from further afield (as detailed in the attached appendices).

Planning applications have been received and consented for new development of between 15 and 22 storeys in the study area. Tall buildings are also consented at other key locations in the city centre and include the 15 storey Abbey Mill House.

Reading's 2020 Vision supports the principle of taller buildings in Reading's Centre and the Council is committed to undertaking a wider tall building strategy.





## Physical Condition

A photographic survey of the study area is included as an appendix to the document. The physical conditions in the area varies according to the level of occupancy, with the south eastern parcel the most extensively occupied and therefore, most active. Although the streetscape is good along Friar Street, any vacancies contribute to a less vibrant street. This worsens still along Greyfriars Road and is most acute along Garrard Street, around the multi-storey car park and empty bus station, where litter, vandalism and dereliction of structures lead to a heightened feeling of insecurity. (See Appendix 3, Section 3.3.3)

Station Hill is of more mixed appearance, with some areas of activity, although the general feeling, especially towards Greyfriars Road is one of isolation with the rest of the city centre.

## Constraints

The main constraints to development are linked to complexities of land ownership across larger sites, particularly in the area of Sainbury's, Friars Walk and the old bus station and multi-storey car park. These larger sites in themselves constrain finer grain development. There are also several listed buildings and conservations areas, described in more detail in *Appendix 3*, *Section 3.3.1*, on the edge of the study area, which will require careful consideration as part of any redevelopment proposals.

Pedestrian access is constrained through the study area, although there are good peripheral routes. Station Road though, becomes congested at peak hours.



Figure 1.4 Constraints

Vehicular access to and within the study area is subject to several restrictions, including bus, disabled and service access at certain times.

The station and its railway infrastructure are both considerable sources of noise that continues into the evening.

The evening economy is vibrant in Reading with bars and pubs concentrated at Friar Street and Station Road. There are also late night cafés on Station Hill that all provide issues of security, noise and safety.





# Visior Station Residential Landmark feature Vehicular street edge Pedestrian street edge Strong entrance points Public open space Private open space 8 fl. shoulder height Accentuated built par Accentuated corner City Centre Iconic structure

The vision for the Station Hill South area has been borne out of a complex set of complementary and sometimes competing, objectives.

There is a clear commitment in the Reading 2020 vision for development in the study area that significantly raises the profile of Reading, from that of a much expanded, predominately Victorian, Thames Valley town to that of an internationally acclaimed and recognised city.

Figure 1.5 The Vision

Bus or taxi only
Pedestrian street
Vehicular street
Improved streetscape
Boundary

Reading Entec



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The vision for the site has evolved to provide a planning framework for development that:

- Provides a permeable part of the city centre and creates new links for people (pedestrians and cyclists) rather than cars: Links will be visual, functional and physical, and should integrate the station with the west of the centre and Friar Street and enable potential links to the North;
- Improves public transport
  access: Development should
  help facilitate the delivery of a
  new Mass Rapid Transport (MRT)
  system and make allowance for
  improvements to the current
  public transport interchange at
  Reading Station;
- Achieves design excellence, innovation and landmark buildings and spaces:

Development should provide high quality landmark, gateway architecture, local legibility and consider its impact on long range visual impacts and important historic buildings;



Figure 1.6: Linkage, Lehrter Bahnhof, Berlin



Figure 1.7: Level changes, Koopgoot, Rotterdam

 Creates a place of character and distinction through the introduction of tall buildings: City scale will set the standard for Reading's primary cluster of tall buildings. Limited building shoulder heights will be used to create better spaces around buildings;

- Creates a network of public open spaces: Development proposals should include or contribute to a variety of open spaces from intimate spaces on Merchant's Place, to wider shopping streets that are privately managed. Open spaces should be fully accessible and use the highest quality soft and hard landscaping materials and encourage biodiversity. All spaces should be compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act (1995, amended 2005);
- Promotes Reading as a safe, interactive and vibrant destination: Proposals should emphasise natural surveillance and wider secured by design issues to ensure that all edges are welcoming and function as communicative frontage;



Figure 1.8: Landmark, Broadgate Tower, London



Figure 1.9: Cluster of tall buildings, Elephant & Castle, London







- **Embraces the principles of** sustainability: Sustainability should underpin all aspects of the design and development process and include integration of land use transportation acceptable habitats for human and non-human species and minimise waste and energy consumption;
- Enhances the city centre by broadening the scope and mix of uses: Land uses must complement existing city centre functions and could include substantial volumes of residential



• Creates local employment and training opportunities: Using local employment in the construction process and maximising opportunities for local people once buildings are occupied will help to sustain Reading's economy. Skills and knowledge in the built environment should be promoted during design, construction and occupation;

- Is financially viable: A sufficient critical mass of development is required to ensure that proposals are capable of completion without significant public sector funding; and
  - Is delivered in a partnership approach: The design development and delivery should all be undertaken by engaging with the local authority, local stakeholders and the wider community.



Figure 1.11: Sustainable eco tower, Elephant & Castle, London





Design principles have been developed in this brief that respond pragmatically to development aspirations for the area. They have been developed to reflect ODPM guidance on good design outlined in PPS1 and PPS6 which states that development should:

- normally be orientated so that it fronts the street;
- respect building lines of the existing urban environment and, where appropriate, build up to the edge of the curtilage;
- maximise the amount of active street frontage;
- avoid designs which are inward looking and which present blank frontages;
- provide level access from the public realm; and
- in the case of development in edge-of-centre locations, provide good pedestrian access to the centre.

The design principles for the Station Hill South area, which are discussed in detail below include:

- Establishing a clear character
- · Allowing for improved freedom of movement
- Open space and landscape
- Designing for tall buildings
- Determining appropriate scale, height and massing
- Active street frontage
- Achieving mixed-use development
- Incorporating high standards of sustainable design
- Designing in safety and security
- Demonstrating viable and flexible phasing







## 2.1.1 Principle 1. Establishing a clear character

### Key objectives are:

- To provide for quality landmark development, setting the benchmark for an outstanding architectural redevelopment of Reading Station and land to the North whilst respecting the built heritage which surrounds the study area.
- The establishment of an accessible and legible transport interchange with clear links to a new MRT facility.
- Secure a wider choice of safe pedestrian and cycle movement patterns.
- The promotion of a mix of uses synonymous with a vibrant city quarter and an 18 hour economy.
- The provision of streets that double as unrestricted visual corridors through the study area.
- To allow for attractive, useable and accessible public open space.
- To integrate public art into buildings, structures, streets and spaces

## Justification:

Station Hill South occupies a key location in Reading City Centre. Defining a distinctive character is essential to achieving a gateway development. High profile, landmark development should deliver a thriving commercial and residential destination. Retail and transport development should be complementary and supportive of the existing and proposed residential and office uses and to other retail provision in Reading. Architecture and public art should create an immediately identifiable place.

## Requirements:

Essential – all requirements for this principle are considered to be essential.

- Modern, innovative buildings should be provided with a high degree of transparency at ground floor level reducing the barriers between internal and external space.
- Distinctive, contrasting and architecturally rich facades above ground floor level will be encouraged, to enliven the street scene and provide a strong sense of place.
- New buildings should accommodate retail and/or leisure facilities at all pedestrian accessed levels with residential and commercial uses above.
- New development should facilitate an integrated station interchange that will include Mass Rapid Transport.
- Development should ensure that views to the North will be extended along existing axes such as Merchants Place and



Figure 2.1: Transparency at ground floor, Bishopsgate, London



Figure 2.2: Example of an MRT stop







Friar's Walk and will facilitate further development beyond Station Hill.

 The study area should have several focal points, for example, around the MRT stop and to the north of Merchants Place, to allow for visibility and better orientation. These should form a comprehensive sequence of visual markers around and through the study area.



Figure 2.3: Views and focal points, Sozhou

- Pedestrian level changes should not transcend more than one storey
  without integrating open spaces and active uses. These level changes
  should also provide a location for activity and meeting and allow for new
  and existing uses to spill out of the buildings.
- Any application should demonstrate that it will contribute to the Council's Public Art Strategy. (see below)
- A comprehensive pedestrian street grid should provide a unique and safe, people-focused environment. Any key pedestrian street should be animated by shops and leisure facilities accommodating cafes, seating areas and integrated art together with the introduction of trees and landscaping.
- A series of tall buildings should form an identifiable cluster in the city centre, acting as landmarks for Reading and that also function at a local level to mark gateways through the study area.

 A network of open spaces should be introduced into the study area.
 Open spaces should assume different layouts, scales and purposes which, for example, function as key routes, level changes or which form entrance points.

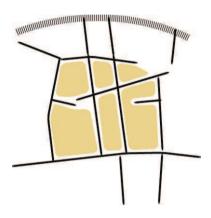


Figure 2.4: Pedestrian grid

## Public Art

Reading Borough Council has recently updated its Public Art Strategy to ensure that developments in Reading take full advantage of the influence that artists can bring. The Public Art Strategy recognises that involving artists can result in the following outcomes, all of which are desirable in the context of new development in the study area:

- Distinctiveness artists can contribute to the creation of a unique identity for a place through work that is original and site specific
- Quality artists can enhance the physical quality of an environment and the experience of those using it
- Sense of place artists can create a sense of place by drawing on key local references such as heritage, topography, site uses and demography
- Engagement artists can involve communities and stakeholders both in the process and the outcomes of their work profile - the involvement of artists can raise the profile of a scheme locally, nationally and internationally







# 2.1.2 Principle 2. Allowing for improved freedom of movement

## Key objectives are:

- Facilitating movement though the study area along desire lines, especially from the station towards Chatham Place and to a new MRT stop.
- Re-open and integrate Friars Walk into new development north of Garrard Street.
- Establishment of a high quality walking and cycling environment that is easy to use and understand, that is well designed, is attractive, safe and well integrated into the surrounding area.
- Prioritise for non-car users with the provision of a minimal amount of car parking, consistent with a high density, public transport rich location.

## Justification:

The planning brief requires a permeable layout. Proposing new routes that integrate and link into existing routes can improve the accessibility of the study area. The development must take proper account of the Central Area Access Plan contained in the 2nd LTP, which provides clear objectives for movement in this area. New and upgraded routes can improve viability through better exposure and visibility of services and destinations. With the study area currently a major blockage to north/south movement in this area of the city centre, good physical and visual links through from Friar Street to the north will improve the retail performance of Friar Street and allow better access to retail areas to the west.

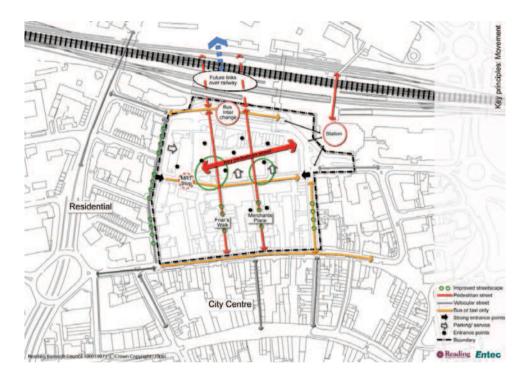


Figure 2.5: Movement

## Requirements:

#### **Essential**

- Development should provide a key pedestrian street achieved through a strong diagonal route providing direct pedestrian access from the station plaza, through the study area, to Friar Street, Chatham Place and to the south.
- It should have a strong "gateway" entrance and lead to a focal point within the study area. It should also interlink with all other routes running through the area and align with the proposed MRT interchange.







- Development should provide a secondary network of streets that provide a north/south route which links Garrard Street to Station Hill.
- Development should further facilitate any future crossing above or below the railway tracks through a flexible layout.
- Development will be required to contribute towards undertaking improvements to the existing routes and key junctions.
- Improvements will be required to existing pedestrian links such as Merchants Place and Friars Walk. Development north of Garrard Street should make provision to link into Friars Walk.
- Pedestrian linkages from the MRT stop should be connected to Friars Walk.



Figure 2.7: Informal Street, One London, London



Figure 2.6: Key pedestrian route, Bishopsgate, London



Figure 2.8: Integrated level changes, Leadenhall, London

#### Desirable

 Improvement will be sought to existing roads such as Station Road and Greyfriars Road.
 Both are currently under review as part of the developing transport strategy. Any development would be expected to contribute to that process.



Figure 2.9: Walkways as art

- High level walkways may be required to bridge Garrard Street and strengthen visual links. These could be formed as aerial public art enlivening Garrard Street and the adjacent streetscape.
- Routes such as Friars Walk should be improved in appearance and usage.
   Links should be more transparent allowing for visual connections that integrate active usage.
- Parking provision and servicing requirements will be commensurate with the high quality expected for the area. However, all detailed issues on parking and service provisions will need to be considered in light of the Central Area Action Plan.
- The Council acknowledges that Garrard Street is currently unattractive for pedestrians and presents a barrier for disabled users. Garrard Street could be redefined as a continuous public street rather than a service route as is currently the case.



Figure 2.10: Wrapped car park, UK







# 2.1.3 Principle 3. Open space and landscape

#### Key objectives are:

- The requirement for the creation of an integrated network of high quality urban spaces.
- The creation of a lively, safe and attractive public realm comprising routes and spaces with active frontages, high quality landscaping and priority for use by non-car users.

## Justification:

The planning brief proposes a hierarchy of linked key routes and spaces. It is acknowledged that the integration and linking of routes and spaces can create permeability. Conversely, potential inactivity, safety and security issues may arise as a result of creating too much permeability.

## Requirements:

#### **Essential**

- The Council will support development that facilitates the delivery of a public plaza to the front of the station that takes full account of
  - the expected levels of use identified for the redesigned station and interchange areas.
- New development opposite the station must exhibit good enclosure with a strong edge to the space, following the removal of all through traffic movement, and create a gateway into the study



Figure 2.12: Station Plaza, St. Giles Court, London

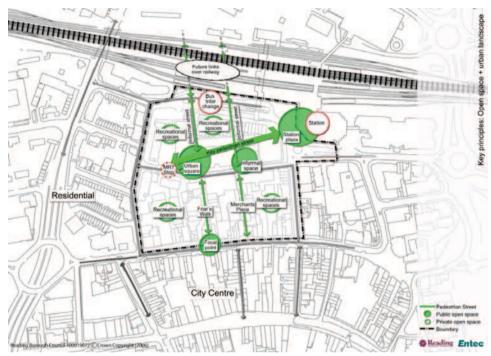


Figure 2.11: Open space and (urban) landscape

- area with transparent ground/ first floor facades that open directly onto the space.
- New spaces should be located at each nodal including Friars Walk and the proposed MRT stop.
- Routes and spaces should be visible and have a specific role and function to play within the study area.



Figure 2.13: Brindley Place, Birmingham







- Private open space should not be accessed directly from public space, although private external spaces (such as balconies and terraces) should benefit from views overlooking the public spaces.
- Informal public and private recreational spaces will be required to serve the needs of residents. It should be



Figure 2.14: Recreational spaces, Coin Street, London

demonstrated that these are relaxing sunny places, quiet and intimate in character comprising landscaped urban space for sitting and relaxing. They should provide a safe environment well overlooked by residential development.

#### **Desirable**

- The Council is looking for development that provides a strong entrance point at each end of Garrard Street that emphasises the importance of the study area to the wider city centre.
- The network of primary and secondary streets should function as open spaces throughout the study area. The scale, quality, design treatment of each of these streets and spaces should reflect their intended function.
- A focal point along Friar Street that acts as a primary entrance to the study area. Existing building structures should be modified to allow for direct physical and visual linkage to the North.







## 2.1.4 Principle 4. Designing for tall buildings

### Key objectives are:

- A cluster of city-scale tall buildings, designed as a 'family' with complementary roofscapes, detailing and material selection should emphasise the location of Reading Station and the Station Plaza.
- The tallest buildings in the area covered by the brief should be close to the Station Plaza to provide a landmark. Figure 2.15 indicates a general gradation of building heights, which respect local scale in the south and west part of the brief area.
- A second landmark location is appropriate at the western end of the area covered by the brief, adjacent to the MRT stop. This should rise from a shoulder height set back along Greyfriars Road, to assist with the transition to the lower townscape to the west. This should be lower than the city-scale buildings adjacent to the Station plaza, but visible from Friar Street and Chatham Place.
- Applications for tall buildings within the study area should take account of the CABE/English Heritage guidance relating to tall buildings.

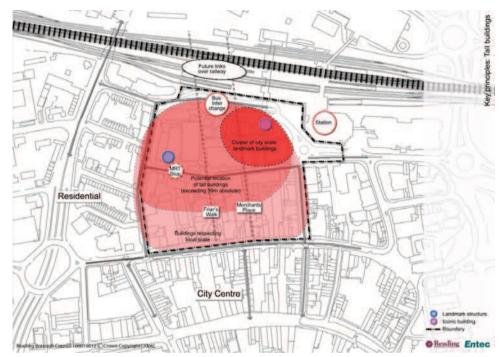
## Justification:

The study area has the potential to accommodate high quality landmark buildings close to the Station, in order to identify the entrance to the development from the south-west and the route to the station and MRT stop. As well as reinforcing the importance of the central location, redevelopment would promote the wider regeneration of the Station area and capitalise on the excellent public transport links.

## Requirements:

Essential - all requirements for this principle are considered essential.

• City scale landmark buildings should be carefully located to emphasise the importance of the city centre and allow for local legibility in the study area by emphasising routes and entrances.



- Tall buildings will need to demonstrate design excellence and make a
  positive addition to wider views and the local setting including built-form
  and topography and contribute to an interesting skyline with wellarticulated shoulder heights and roofscapes.
- 360° view analysis should be used to enable assessment of the impacts on the Reading skyline both during the daytime and at night. This analysis should be accompanied by a full visual impact assessment undertaken in accordance with the methodology as set out in the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Assessment's Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and using view points approved in discussion with the Council, including photo-realistic renderings.
- Tall buildings should also demonstrate a positive relationship to other buildings, streets, public and private spaces, especially historic buildings.





Ground levels should be largely accessible to the public. Buildings will be expected to interact with the streetscape providing frequent doors and windows, atria and active ground floor uses:

- The shadowing impacts on buildings and spaces within the area covered by the brief and adjacent spaces and buildings should be addressed when formulating proposals. Buildings should be sited and orientated to avoid excessive overshadowing of neighbouring buildings and land as much as possible.
- The position and design of tall buildings in the study area must provide an acceptable microclimate.
- London Wind impact studies should accompany applications for all buildings over 25m. • Any structures that exceed 90m in height will be reported to the Civil Aviation Authority by the Council and applicants must supply
- appropriate data to the Council upon request. • Applications for tall buildings will need to demonstrate they do not constitute an impact on telecommunication networks;
- Public access to the upper floors of the tallest buildings in the area covered by the brief, to include viewing space;
- Tall buildings must accord with the Council's SPD on Sustainable Design and Construction, illustrate exemplary standards of sustainable construction and resource management and potential for renewable energy generation and recycling, through the inclusion of a sustainability strategy.



Figure 2.16: An example of a cluster of city scale landmark buildings: Bishopsgate Tower,

• The Design and Access Statement submitted with any planning application should respond to all opportunities or constraints that makes the site(s) suitable for tall buildings. The statement should explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the following aspects of the proposal: amount, layout, scale, landscaping and appearance.

#### Note:

A review of Reading skyline (see appendices) shows limited impact on the skyline in the study area of buildings of up to (approx) 25m above street level (approx 70m AOD).

In the context of the study area, with existing structures at 12, 15 (under construction) and 17 (commercial) storeys, the definition of a 'tall building' in the study area refers to structures over approx. 11 storeys of commercial (or 13 residential) equating to approximately 39m tall.







# 2.1.5 Principle 5. Determining appropriate scale, height and massing

## Key objectives are:

- Development in the study area should respect the scale of existing development and use setbacks at upper level to reduce the impact of the new development on the street.
- Larger-scale development is to be concentrated to the north of the study area, focused on the station environs.
- Block sizes and depths should relate to the scale of the urban fabric in the study area and in neighbouring areas.
- The generally low/mid-rise character of Friar Street is to be maintained.
- The massing of structures either adjacent to or above open spaces should be designed to allow maximum penetration of natural light to the street.

## Justification:

The scale of development, measured in terms of height and massing, must relate to its surroundings. Where streets of fairly uniform character exist, new development should not undermine existing scale. Development to the northern half of the study area is more varied in terms of its mixed height and fragmented massing. A gradual increase of scale and mass towards the station will allow peripheral character to be maintained whist increasing the impact of a new quarter.

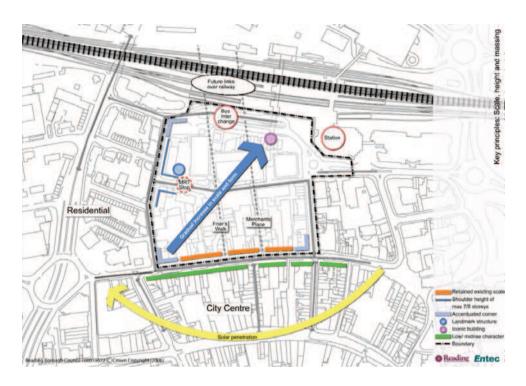


Figure 2.17: Scale, height and massing

## Requirements:

#### **Essential**

- Development mass should increase in a north-easterly direction respecting the existing townscape and vertical rhythm on Friar Street and upper Greyfriars Road, adjacent to Greyfriars Vicarage.
- On most block corners, key buildings should be accentuated in accordance with figure 2.17, thereby maintaining local scale but providing additional legibility to development.







- Buildings over open spaces (including the MRT stop and land to the north of Merchants Place) should utilise cantilevered floorplates or unfold several storeys above to allow through views and natural light penetration to the street whilst allowing airspace for development.
- Shoulder height setbacks should be introduced on Greyfriars Road at maximum 7/8 storeys to retain acceptable scale to the street and to acknowledge the scale of surrounding built form.



- At the junction of Greyfriars Road and Garrard Street, setbacks should allow views into Garrard Street by continuing building setbacks up to the MRT stop.
- Building mass should be orientated so as to afford maximum solar gain and southerly aspects, whilst casting minimum shadow onto surrounding properties and spaces.
- Development should establish a height profile that maximises environmental and microclimate benefits.



Figure 2.18: Accentuated corner, Leeds

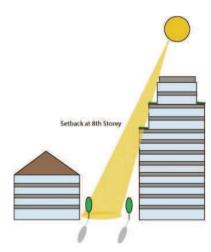


Figure 2.20: Sketch, Shoulder Height Setback

Development should maximise day lighting and encourage solar penetration to public spaces whilst providing protection from the wind.



Figure 2.19: Narrow distances between buildings with poorly lit open space, Timber Wharf, Manchester.







## 2.1.6 Principle 6. Active Frontage

#### Key objectives are:

- The provision of active frontages at street level (and some upper floors) should be created to make the area feel safe and well used.
- Residential and commercial entrances should be located at regular distances within the ground floor façade to enliven the street.
- Public art should be located at building edges and should be designed as an integral part of any scheme or building.
- Development should demonstrate an understanding of the difference between public fronts and private backs.

## Justification:

From "By Design" (DETR, 2000):

"Facades can be enlivened by active uses (such as shops and restaurants), entrances, colonnades, and windows (views into the building give interest to passers-by and make the building's function apparent, while views out of the building facilitate overlooking, which contributes to safety)".

The planning brief deals specifically with the building frontages because the success of the study area depends on the quality of the public interface.

It is, therefore, important to create edges that are considered, visually interesting and balanced in their design.

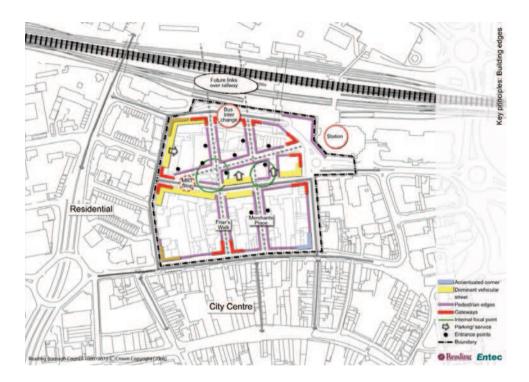


Figure 2.21: Building edges

## Requirements:

## Essential – all requirements for this principle are considered essential.

- Tall Buildings must be developed in the round such that all faces of the buildings are considered.
- Blank or inactive facades onto existing active frontages and elevations will not be permitted in any circumstances.
- Where the street or open space is to be designed as a pedestrian space or route, such public frontages should include retail, cafes and restaurants spilling out onto a generously proportioned pedestrianised street.







- Robust streetscape design and good lighting will be important to cater for pedestrian activity throughout the day and into the evening. Street trees, seating and street furniture should be introduced to bring activity.
- Residential and commercial entrances should be integrated into the active frontages.
- Activity on corner sites is essential to retain pedestrian interest to the end of streets and around the pedestrian network, as well as creating an active focus at junctions.
- Vehicular entrances to buildings must be kept to minimum operational widths and frequencies to avoid dead space and pedestrian/vehicular conflict on the footway. The principal service points for land to the north of Garrard Street will be from Greyfriars Road and the covered area of Garrard Street. However access will need to take into account the wider changes



Figure 2.22: Sketch, Level change



Figure 2.23: Pedestrian street edges, London



Figure 2.24: Vehicular street edge, London

- in permitted access in the central area as set out in the Central Area Action Plan.
- Residential accommodation (although not entrances) will be resisted on the ground floor.
- In-block and undercroft car parking should be "wrapped" by activities on all levels. Internal spaces should adhere to the Safer Car Parks Scheme.



Figure 2.25: Public art, Chicago

#### Note:

"By Design" defines active and dead frontages as follows:

"Active and dead frontages at ground floor level: positive factors such as entrances, shop-fronts and windows; and negative factors such as long blank facades and high boundary walls, solid roller shutters to shop-fronts, and service entrances and vards;



Figure 2.26: Artistic frontage, Salzburg

Active and dead frontages at upper floors: positive factors such as windows of

habitable rooms overlooking public space; and negative factors such as blank gable walls and unused space over shops".





## 2.1.7 Principle 7. Achieving mixed use development

## Key objectives are:

- Development should seek to provide a viable mix of residential, B1 (office) and community uses as well as retail, restaurants, cafes and high quality recreation, entertainment, and family orientated leisure facilities.
- Residential development shall include a balanced and integrated mix of size and tenure.

## Justification:

From "By Design" (DETR, 2000)

"Higher density commercial and mixed-use developments, civic buildings and developments likely to generate large numbers of visitors are best located within close walking distance of public transport interchanges".

Locating a significant quantum of development adjacent to Reading Station, the MRT system and an upgraded public transport interchange will reduce the need to travel by car. Mixing uses in the development that complement other uses in the city centre will improve choice and further enliven an already vibrant core. Designing for durability and robustness will allow mixes of use to change over time and adapt to the market if conditions change.

## Requirements:

Essential - all requirements for this principle are considered essential.

• Development across the study area must provide for a balance of residential and office uses that are flexible in floorspace.

- The development of tall buildings should allow both large and small-scale occupiers.
- Cafes, restaurants, retailing, community and leisure facilities should be encouraged in order to create a viable mix of uses encouraging day and night time activities. Residential development



Figure 2.27: Mixed uses, Harven Block, Netherthands

- will be expected to mitigate, where possible, against any disturbance arising from this city centre location in accordance with PPG24 (Planning and Noise.
- As well as its primary function as a transport interchange, the MRT stop should act as a focus within the study area that allows for the provision of complementary uses, such as convenience retail or cafes.
- The design of new buildings should allow for the possibility of changes in use over time.
- Community uses should be provided within the study area and allow for a crèche and/or childcare facilities, public conveniences, shopmobility, taxi parking, leisure uses and licensed premises.



Figure 2.28: Active uses, St. Giles Court, London





# 2.1.8 Principle 8. Incorporating high standards of sustainable design

## Key objectives are:

- Tall buildings can help to maximise the use of previously developed land, and alleviate the effects of urban sprawl.
- Development should demonstrate positive yield in terms of environmental and ecological benefits
- Methods should be adopted that efficiently produce, deliver and use energy, such as maximising solar gain and implementing insulation.
- Further methods should be adopted that are designed to address climate change, such as reducing or regulating CO2 emissions from heating systems.
- Site waste management plans should be designed to identify wasteful activities, minimise waste, and encourage recycling.
- Development should include a water management scheme addressing flood risk and water usage.
- The provision of localised strategies to alleviate vehicular demand and encourage usage of public transport, cycling or walking.
- Materials should be selected which have been assessed to have the lower embodied energy and environmental impacts.
- Development should meet the requirements of the local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

## Justification:

The opportunities to achieve sustainable development through building vertically, and in higher densities can provide both impressive and beneficial results. Embracing this concept will also reduce the potentially adverse impacts of urban sprawl.

## Requirements:

#### **Essential:**

#### BREEAM:

- The Council will be seeking compliance with BREEAM and Eco Homes for all uses and buildings in the study area. For development of the quality and profile required at Station Hill South, the Council will require a BREEAM/EcoHomes rating of 'Excellent' for all buildings.
- Applicants should demonstrate compliance with the adoption of the BRE Green Guide for housing to



Figure 2.29: Eco tower, Elephant & Castle, London

preclude the use of materials rated within category C (rated as having the most negative effects on the environment).

## Energy Efficiency

- Buildings should be orientated to maximise solar gain.
- Applicants should demonstrate how the thermal mass of the building will be used to maintain energy.
- Mechanical ventilation and air conditioning should be avoided where possible.
- Applicants should specify the quality of all building insulation, including glazing.





## Sustainable Transport:

**Development should include** a Green Travel Plan that will be expected to cover:

- Provision of safe, covered and lockable cycle storage for residents and changing facilities for employees;
- Secure by Design standards to promote walking;
- Identified walking and cycle routes, especially to Reading Station; and
- Support of the provision of a local, regular bus service and/or MRT system, which is likely to be particularly feasible due to the high number of residents.

## Inclusive Design:

- Measures should be taken to achieve an environment which is accessible and appealing to all regardless of physical ability, age, gender or circumstances.
- Integrated Tenure It is important that the study centre contains a
  mixture of different tenures to reflect different needs and requirements of
  the community and individuals. This helps to meet the objectives of
  social cohesion and encourage sustainable communities.

## Waste Management:

 Site Waste Management Plans must be produced for development schemes during both the demolition and construction phases which are aimed at identifying wasteful activities and areas, minimising the waste produced, and recycling as much material as possible.  Operational waste management plans will be required to ensure that all residents and occupiers have the opportunity to recycle as much as possible, for example, by providing designated recycling storage and pickup points internally and externally.



Figure 2.29: Waste management

 Servicing arrangements for all uses will require full consideration at the scheme design stage.

## Water Management:

- A water management scheme will need to address the management of rainfall to avoid flooding and the minimisation of water usage to reasonable levels.
- Applicants should investigate and adopt where appropriate, techniques of sustainable urban drainage (SUDS) to reduce grey water run-off.

## Air Quality:

- Reading Borough Council has recently carried out a detailed assessment
  of Air Quality in accordance with the Environment Act 1995. The study
  area is potentially in an area where it is indicated that that the levels of
  NO2 are close to or in excess of the National Air Quality Objectives. At
  present an Air Quality Management Area has not been declared pending
  a consultation period in the area.
- PPS23 and the NSCA guidance "Development Control Planning for Air







Quality" recommend that new exposure to poor air quality should be considered as a material planning consideration. It is recommended that applicants contact Reading Borough Council's Environmental Protection Team to discuss the Air Quality issues

## Ecology:

The ecology of the study area is limited although Black Redstarts are known to nest in the area. Applicants should identify opportunities to improve or maximise the biodiversity of the study area, which should be addressed by a qualified ecologist as part of an Environmental Statement.

Building tall buildings can also yield potential ecological and environmental benefits by integrating vertical landscaping, roof gardens or vegetation within the architecture. Further consideration will be expected as part of any application for taller buildings.

## Health and Wellbeing

The feeling that a new development communicates to its users, occupiers and residents is key to its success, such as:

- Acceptable levels of daylight and views available to residents and office workers (avoiding overshadowing);
- Acceptable quality of sound insulation, especially in relation to the railway and non-confroming uses;
- The provision of private, or amenity space to all residents through shared in-block amenity space, balconies, roof terraces or loggias.

## 2.1.9 Principle 9. Designing in safety and security

## Key objectives are:

- Create clearly-defined streets.
- Encourage street surveillance or 'eyes on the streets' by visually exposing sides of buildings to passer-bys and providing good lighting. Building design involving windows and entrances which overlook public space can also facilitate surveillance.
- Demarcate between private and public spaces.
- Select and implement security measures that have been properly tested and properly integrate, install and use them.
- Encourage a good level of street activity.
- Proposals should contribute to the existing CCTV network.
- Manage and maintain tidiness and good upkeep to send a message that criminal and anti-behaviour will not be tolerated.
- Ensure ongoing management and maintenance of the public realm.

## Justification:

Making places safer is about more than crime prevention. It requires a design response and consultative approach which engages with the community, police and other key stakeholders to promote and define safe, sustainable and attractive environments that meet the full set of planning objectives.

## Requirements:

#### **Essential**

 All new development should follow the principles as set out by the guidance "Secured by Design" published by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO). Applications should clearly demonstrate how these have been included in proposals.







## 2.1.10 Principle 10. Phasing

#### Key objectives are:

- Submission of comprehensive programmes that identify sequence for completions of development sites, timing of permissions and critical path for marketing, delivery, disposal and occupation.
- The delivery of comprehensive planning applications that recognise, resolve and deliver on mutually critical land parcels with adjoining landowners.
- Ensuring that amenity space, parking and public open space as well as other critical infrastructure is programmed for completion before building occupancy.
- Provision for the re-siting and re-routeing of services during demolition and construction
- The provision of considered development options that provide assurance at outline application stage that deliverable contingencies are in place to render structures and spaces habitable and viable in cases that phasing suffers delay or cancellation (Force majeure etc)

## Justification:

With a study area of this complexity, and the potential, for a number of major sites to be built out simultaneously, disruption in the study area to residents, and other users can be considerable. There is also the possibility of scheme elements coming forward that are dependent on later stages of infrastructure than may or may not be delivered. The Council will, therefore, require very detailed phasing information for all major applications in the study area whose success, however partial, is dependent on the co-operation of delivery of neighbouring schemes and ownerships.

## Requirements:

#### Essential

- A full building phasing strategy should be developed as a central resource for all major, independent development in the study area, and particularly for applications involving land to the north of Garrard Street.
- Proposed access and movement strategies will be required for all movement modes at the key stages in construction for individual sites.
- Major infrastructure works, such as the possible relocation of the major sewer, will need to be identified and scheduled at the design stage.
- Building operation information, in terms of occupier access, amenity, parking etc. should be provided for all structures that interface with other application sites.







# 3. DESIGN CODES AND DESIGN STATEMENTS 27

The ten development principles outlined in section 2 of this document have both site specific and general application across the area of study. The Council will require assurance that the principles in this SPD are being followed. This is to be achieved through the adoption of design codes and two stage design statements.

## Design codes - how to use them

Codes should be prepared to provide flexibility and certainty. They should offer guidance on the parameters that will secure a satisfactory design solution to a specific issue. Codes should formalise development form. Details on specific materials and style (other than those to be avoided) should not be included.

An Urban Design Code can contain detail on both detail and broader fundamental aspects of design issues.

Codes should link to a regulatory masterplan that forms part of the design statement and application and include the following:

#### Statement

A description explaining the code.

#### **Justification**

A reason why the code has been prepared. This should be related to the Planning and Urban Design Brief for the study area.

#### Illustration

Showing an interpretation of principles in the Brief, designed to reflect current best practice and in accordance with Building Code legislation where appropriate.

Codes should be submitted with outline planning applications for the following aspects of development:

- Building heights linked to a regulatory masterplan, this will specify locations for maximum building heights (including services and lift overrun) according to principles set out in the Brief.
- Building setbacks at upper levels Guidance should be provided on height, depth and treatment of building setbacks above the building shoulder line. Codes should also define uses and design criteria for space created by setbacks, avoiding underutilised areas.
- Gateway architecture Gateways into the study area are critical at Station Hill South. Where pedestrian entrances are through buildings, design codes must be developed that indicate how visual connectivity is to be maintained through structures (for example by cantilevering floorplates) whilst affording maximum opportunities for active frontages through the adoption of double height frontages.
- Level changes Level transition is both complex and fundamental to the success of integrated development in the study area. A design code should be developed that applies the guidance in principles 1, 2 and 3 and allows for changes of level through active platforms under high level built projections.
- Disabled access There is a requirement for disabled users to be able
  to move freely through the space. Applicants should clearly identify and
  code acceptable forms of disabled access provision to ensure unified
  solutions throughout the study area.
- **Key open spaces** Design principle 3 provides further guidance on open spaces. Open space locations should feature in a regulating masterplan.







# 3. DESIGN CODES AND DESIGN STATEMENTS 28

Guidance may be provided on acceptable planting species and details of space dimensions, especially distances between buildings, included.

- Balconies and private amenity space Details should be provided of acceptable design solutions to balconies, loggias and other 'in-curtilage' amenity features and criteria established to preserve the visual aesthetic at height.
- Active frontage A design code will be required that provides assurance that development fronting the street will be active. This will include guidance on achieving activity across split levels and double height spaces, techniques employed to 'wrap' undercroft parking and services areas with single aspect, development and details of the interface between private areas and the public realm. Treatments to entrances for parking and service areas will be required, together with details of the treatment to emergency exits onto the public realm will form part of this code.
- Building façade treatments Many recent high profile developments
  have suffered from internal façade clutter after occupation, undermining
  the elegance of tall structures. A design code should be used to illustrate
  how external and internal systems (Brises Soleils, glazed curtain walling
  and screening louvres) can maintain the clean external profile of buildings
  and permit a range of internally mixed-uses.
- **Signage** Design codes can be used to limit the impact of changing retail signage by requiring these to be set behind glazed frontage. This code should be discussed in further detail with the Council's Development Control Team.

In addition to following the principles set out in the brief, codes should be prepared following the guidance set out in "By Design".

Furthermore, the Council will actively seek to hold pre-application discussions with applicants intending to submit a planning application in the study area. Applicants should clearly demonstrate compliance with the principles set out in this brief and identify how these principles are to be applied on any site through the production of a design statement.

The agreement on which principles and how they will be followed should be recorded and validated as part of pre-application discussions. Although initial design concepts informed by the principles are encouraged as a tool for discussion, the Council actively promotes the development of supporting information in the form of a 'stage 1' design statement, agreeing to which principles development will adhere and demonstrate the use of these in any emerging masterplan.

'Stage 2' design statements will be expected to demonstrate how the principles agreed in 'Stage 1' have been followed and translated into a masterplan document.

'Stage 2' design statements should also include regulatory masterplans and design codes where applicable, as set out in this brief.







# 4. INFORMATION REQUIRED AS PART OF A PLANNING APPLICATION 29

Applicants considering development in this study area will need to demonstrate how they have utilised this Planning and Urban Design Brief.

Full compliance with the following list will be required from applicants in the study area. However this list is not exhaustive and early pre-application discussion with the Local Planning Authority are advised:

- 1. Full site survey
- 2. Site analysis and contextual study
- 3. Full views study, from local and distant views and sensitive receptors, to include an assessment of the impact on the evening skyline
- 4. Daylighting/ shadowcasting
- 5. Micro-climate study, with particular emphasis on wind effects
- 6. The need for an environmental assessment (EA)
- 7. Ground conditions, contamination and mitigation measures
- 8. Detailed contamination survey indicating issues associated with excavation, foundations, undercroft parking as well as full remediation strategy
- 9. Flood risk assessment (1 in 100 year situation
- 10. Survey of underground services;
- 11. Undertakers' services (gas, electricity, water supply, etc.)
- 12. Sewerage and drainage considerations
- 13. Archaeological desk-based assessment, as an initial part of a possible phased requirement, as appropriate
- 14. Environmental health issues (fire, waste, noise, fumes, dust, light pollution, air quality, impact of railway noise etc.)
- 15. Noise in construction
- 16. Construction method statement
- 17. Sustainability appraisal (including air, water, waste, noise, land, materials and other matters, as set out in the RBC documents "Sustainable Development, A Developers' Guide; A checklist for good environmental building"; and "Draft Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document" (July 2006) and the requirements in Principle 8 of this Brief).
- 18. Ecology assessment, including nature conservation, trees and other wildlife issues
- 19. Landscape strategy

- 20. Full transport assessment (TA) including travel plan(s);
- 21. Car parking provision and management strategy that adopt the principles identified in PPG13
- 22. Retail and commercial (impact) assessment
- 23. Developer's assessment of relevant policy matters contained in the Berkshire Structure Plan and the Reading Borough Local Plan (or the emerging Reading Borough Local Development Framework) and
- 24. Two-stage detailed Design and Access Statement in accordance with Section 3 and including 'design codes' on specified aspects also contained in Section 3
- 25. Statement on the creation of mixed and balanced communities
- 26. Crime and safety statement;
- 27. Accessibility considerations
- 28. Section 106 Agreement: responding to the Council's SPG on Planning Obligations
- 29. Affordable housing provision
- 30. Open space and community facilities provision and appropriate contributions
- 31. Public art (applicants will be expected to engage in a process which involves artists at an early stage in the design and masterplanning of the site, giving them an opportunity to contribute to the conception, development and transformation of the public realm. This process should encourage the widest possible application of the artist's imagination, creativity and interpretation. Applicants will be offered the opportunity to work in partnership with the Council's "Artists in the City" programme to create and implement a strategic approach to working with artists on this development).

All these matters will need to be addressed in discussion with the Council's Planning Section during preapplication discussions. The Council operates a strict timetable for all applications to meet Government
set targets for the determination of planning applications. It is essential that all the above matters and any
others agreed with the pre-application case officer, are fully researched, resolved and discussed with a
planning officer and that Heads of Terms for any Section 106 legal agreement are agreed prior to the
submission of any planning application. This will assist in the achievement of a favourable outcome. For
major proposals, it may be recommended that pre-application consultation with key stakeholders and
the wider community is carried out by the applicant. Adequate time should be allowed for such an
exercise as part of the process. Any planning application received after 1 January 2007 will be subject to
the forthcoming Validation Checklist. Thereafter, applications which are not supported by information
which the Checklist indicates to be required will not be validated.







# If you need help to fill in or understand this planning document or planning application form, please call 0118 939 0587 or 0118 9553717, or visit the Information Centre on Level 4 of the Civic Centre.

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਯੋਜਨਾ ਪੱਤੂ ਨੂੰ ਜਾਂ ਯੋਜਨਾ ਬੇਨਤੀ ਪੱਤੂ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਣ ਲਈ ਜਾਂ ਭਰਨ ਲਈ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ. ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 0118 9390587 ਤੇ ਜਾਂ 0118 9553717 ਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਸਿਵਿਕ ਸੈਂਟਰ ਵਿਚ ਚੌਥੀ ਪੱਧਰ ਤੇ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕੇਂਦਰ ਵਿਚ ਆਓ।

Punjabi

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Arabic

Ne gofte keni nevoje ge te kuptoni ose te mbushni kete forme document per allikin plai, ju lutemi telefononi 0118 9390587 Ose 0118 9553717, ose pargituni prane zyres informacionit Civic Centre Katin e 4

Albanian

اگرآپ ویلانگ کی اس وستاویزیا پلانگ درخواست کے فارم میں سے کسی کویر کرنے یا سیحفے کیلئے مددر کار . ہوتو براہ م ہانی 01189390857 مازل مانک 01189553717 بٹیلیفون کر س ماسوک سنٹر کی چوتھی منزل برواقع مركزمعلومات (انفارميشن سنشر) مين تشريف لائين -

Urdu

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For general information about planning call us on 0800 626540 or E-mail: planning.info@reading.gov.uk

To send us comments on a specific planning application E-mail: planningcomments@reading.gov.uk

Or visit the Planning Reception in the fover on the ground floor of the Civic Centre, Reading, or write to the address below.



Planning Section, Planning & Transport, Director of Environment, Culture & Sport, Reading Borough Council, Reading RG1 7TD

Tel: Freephone 0800 626540 Email: planningcomments@reading.gov.uk Web: www.reading.gov.uk March 2007





















# Station Hill South Planning and Urban Design Brief Appendices

Planning Section, Planning & Transport,
Director of Environment, Culture & Sport,
Reading Borough Council,
Civic Centre,
Reading RG1 7TD
Tel: 0800 626540

Email: planning.info@reading.gov.uk www.reading.gov.uk

















# 1. Introduction

Part 2 of this document provides the supporting information that has lead to the production of principles as set out in Part 1.

# 2. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Policies with specific relevance to the design principles for Station Hill have been briefly summarised below:

# 2.1 National Policy Context

National planning advice which has been found relevant to the proposals for Reading Station Hill includes the following Planning Policy Guidance Notes [PPG] and Planning Policy Statements [PPS]:

• PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development [2004]

• PPG3: Housing [2000]

• PPS6: Planning for Town Centres [2005]

• PPG13: Transport [2000]

# 2.1.1 PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development [2004]

PPS1 outlines overall policies on delivering sustainable development throughout the planning system. Its policies emphasise quality design which encourage social progress, protection of the environment, prudent use of

natural resources and maintaining high levels of economic growth and employment. PPS1 also promotes mixed-use developments through creating vitality and diversity, and in effect, positively affecting both town centres and surrounding residential communities. This also significantly reduces the need to travel and provides sustainable modes to facilities. Furthermore, it states that any design which is inappropriate in context or that does not improve the way an area functions, should not be accepted.

# 2.1.2 PPG3: Housing [2000]

PPG3 provides planning guidance on encouraging quality residential developments in town centres, emphasising the importance of good design and re-use of urban land and uses. It maintains that this can be a significant contribution towards delivering urban renaissance. The new draft PPS3: Housing, which is currently at consultation draft stage, will replace PPG3 once it is adopted. Specifically, the policy will emphasise a commitment towards high quality design for housing and encourage local authorities to apply design codes or site briefs. It is designed to expedite planning decisions and minimise confusion on what is expected of the developer. The draft PPS3 has also taken into account a previous consultation for a document called *Planning for Mixed Communities* [2005].

# 2.1.3 PPS6: Planning for Town Centres [2005]

PPS6 outlines planning guidance for town centres to promote vitality and viability by planning and enhancing growth and development for existing centres and encouraging a wide and accessible range of services in a good environment. PPS6 states that it is essential that town centres should provide a safe and high quality environments and that design should be inclusive and of this same high quality.





# 2.1.4 PPG13: Transport [2000]

PPG13 outlines planning guidance to promote more sustainable transport choices, aiming to promote accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services. Proposals for developments should be located in areas which are accessible by public transport, walking and cycling, thereby working towards reducing vehicular use.

# 2.1.5 Towards an Urban Renaissance (2005)

Many of the recommendations set forth in the original Urban Task Force Report [1999] influenced and shaped many current and future policies on towns and cities across the UK. Since its publication, new issues have emerged while many causes of urban decline remain to be persistent problems. The new report [2005] places emphasis on excellence in design quality and procurement, the importance of mixed urban communities and their social well-being, environmental responsibility through placing priority on using brownfield before greenfield and, improving techniques of sustainable design. The report also provides recommendations on creating a single, 'clearly recognisable and empowered, regeneration delivery body, with a skilled management team' in order to ensure design excellence, and deliver significant social, economic and environmental for all communities.

Wider good practice on urban design is set out in other Government documents, such as, *By Design, Urban Design in the Planning System:*Towards Better Practice; Safer Places: The Planning System and Crime Prevention; and Planning and Access for Disabled People: A Good Practice Guide.

# 2.2 Strategic and Regional Policy Context

# 2.2.1 Regional Planning Guidance for the Southeast [RPG9]

RPG9 Provides the regional planning policy framework which includes key elements such as making better use of land and the appropriate integration of land use and the transport network. Policy Q2 specifically seeks to raise the quality of life in urban areas while Policy Q5 promotes major office, retail and leisure development, including tourism and related sports and recreation to underpin an 'urban renaissance'. Policy Q3 encourages local authorities to maximise development density, with particular emphasis on locations which are most accessible. RPG9 in this context should be read in conjunction with the *Regional Transport Strategy* and *Regional Energy Strategy*.

# 2.2.2 Draft South East Plan [2006-2016]

Part Two of the Draft South East Plan is currently in consultation. Once adopted, the Plan will replace both RPG9 and the Structure Plan. The Plan will form the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East, providing for a vision with focus on housing, transport, economy and the environment for the next two decades until 2026. As part of a regional network of 49 centres, Reading is designated as a primary regional centre and is a significant hub for retail, leisure, office, cultural and community developments. The upgrade to the station capacity and its functionality are also established regional priorities.





# 2.2.3 The Regional Economic Strategy for South East England [2002–2012]

RES for the South East provides an overall vision of 'smart growth' for the region, in the context of sustainable development. The RES builds on five key objectives which are headlined under competitive business, successful people, vibrant communities, effective infrastructure, and the sustainable use of natural resources. The RES identifies the upgrade of capacity at Reading Station as a key regional aim and economic driver.

# 2.2.4 The Berkshire Structure Plan [2001-2016]

The overall vision of the Structure Plan is one of sustainable development and the creation of diverse, sustainable communities. Existing urban areas will be the principal focus for future development with the scale of development to be related to its current and future accessibility by public transport, cycling and walking and levels of infrastructure, services and employment. Station Hill is and will remain one of the most accessible locations in Berkshire. Reading is identified as a Major Town where major development will be located.

The relevant policies within the BSP include DP1, DP4, DP5, EN4, H3, H6, E1, E4, S1, T2, and T5:

- Policy DP1 outlines the overall spatial strategy, directing major development to major towns, including Reading;
- Policy DP4 states that prior to planning permission, any requirements on necessary infrastructure, services and amenities must be satisfied;

- Policy DP5 promotes quality in urban and suburban areas, for instance, such areas can be characterised by diverse land uses, good design and movement;
- Policy EN4 advocates the conservation of historic features or areas of historic importance;
- Policy H3 prioritises the location of housing developments to previouslydeveloped land and existing buildings in urban areas with good accessibility;
- Policy H6 encourages the increase in residential density in order to make more efficient use of land, potentially in excess of 50 dwellings per hectare in urban areas:
- Policy E1 states that Reading is one of the principal locations for major office development, which should be of a scale appropriate to the role of the centre;
- Policy E4 states that in reviewing employment land, authorities should ensure that the amount and character of employment land and premises is appropriate;
- Policy S1 designates Reading as a major regional centre for the Thames
   Valley and as a top UK commercial and retail destination; and
- Policy T5 promotes planned car parking in an aim to achieve a decrease in vehicular travel, particularly in urban areas.







# 2.3 Local Policy Context

# 2.3.1 The Reading Borough Local Plan

The Reading Borough Local Plan (RBLP) was adopted in October 1998. The policies of the Reading Borough Local Plan are effectively "saved" under the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and remain part of the Development Plan (38.6). They will be replaced over time with the adoption of LDF documents; the first of which it is anticipated will be adopted towards the end of 2007/early 2008.

A considerable number of saved policies in the RBLP are relevant to the Station Hill proposals:

- CUD14: Standards of Design in Development aims to strive for high design standards while observing compatibility with the scale and character of the surrounding environment;
- HSG5: Residential Design Standards outlines guidance which takes into account the character, design, density, layout and safety for residential development;
- TRN6: Pedestrians promotes a provision of a pedestrian network throughout the Borough;
- WAT9: Waterway Design Objectives ensures that the development of properties adjacent to waterways will enhance their appearance; and
- CEN13: Major Development Sites in the Town Centre allocates specific sites for development, in accordance with policies outlined in the rest of the Plan. C7 Station Hill/Garrard Street/Friars Walk major development

scheme including A1 retail, A2 financial and professional services, A3 and other leisure uses, B1 business use, community space, bus station on Station Hill and public car park with a maximum of 1000 spaces. Provision of public art and public open areas that will strengthen pedestrian links between Station Hill and Friar Street. (CEN 7, CEN 8, CEB 10). No Net Gain

# 2.3.2 The Reading Borough Local Development Framework (RBLDF)

Documents forming part of the Reading Borough Local Development Framework (RBLDF) are currently being prepared. Public participation on the Core Strategy Document, Preferred Options took place in March/April 2006 and the Core Strategy itself was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in January 2007. The Core Strategy Submission Document sets out the key elements of the planning framework for the Borough and contains a spatial vision and strategic objectives for the Borough, along with a spatial strategy, and core policies.

The Council also consulted on the Reading Central Area Action Plan, Issues and Options during March/April 2006. This was the first stage in the preparation of a separate LDF document on the central area. This document notes that the Station Area, which includes the Station Hill site, is a major development site that will provide and complement major improvements to transport infrastructure in the Central Area of Reading. The document sets out options for the future development of retail, offices, residential, etc., in the Central Area. Preferred Options were published in January 2007. A Submission Document will be published towards the end of 2007.

All LDF documents must be subjected to sustainability appraisal. Reading Borough Council has prepared a Revised Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report that provides the framework for appraising all LDF documents including SPD's.







- The LDF documents are at a very early stage in their preparation and hold very little weight as material considerations. They do, however, indicate the emerging strategy for the Reading Central Area and the importance of the Station Hill Site to the success of that strategy
- 2nd Local Transport Plan 2006
- Reading Station area Redevelopment (STAR) 2002
- Strategic Environmental Assessment 2006
- Parking Policies 2004

# 2.4 2nd Local Transport Plan

# 2.4.1

The 2nd LTP for Reading will be formally adopted on the 20th March 2006 and replaces the existing LTP as the Council's Transport policy statement for the next 5 years. The LTP contains detailed policies and objectives that relate to the station area and will need to be considered as part of this brief. The detailed transport strategy is set out in the Central Reading Action plan section of the 2nd LTP.

# 2.4.2

The transport functions of the station area and access from all areas of Reading to this area are key parts of the transport strategy. Any proposals for this site must demonstrate a clear understanding of the overall functionality of the area and its expected future role. The following documents will need to be considered as transport policy background to this brief and seen to influence any planning application: -

# 2.5 Other Local Documents and Initiatives

In addition to Local Plan policies, the following RBC Supplementary Planning Guidance is relevant to new development in the study area:

- Planning Obligations Under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (2004)
- Sustainable Design and Construction (See also Sustainability Objectives in following section)
- Planning Application Checklist (2003)

Developers should also be aware of the Council's Local Transport Plan 2006 - 2011, and in particular of the following strategies contained within it:

- The Interim Cycling Strategy
- The Walking Strategy
- The Bus Strategy







Applicants should also be aware of the following documents which are found to be relevant to the development and should be read in conjunction:

- Reading 2020: Making It Happen Community Strategy [2004-2007];
- Reading 2020: Vision [1999];
- Provisional Local Transport Plan [2006-2011];
- Central Reading Parking Strategy 2004;
- Reading City Centre 2010 You'll Notice the Difference;
- Reading Borough Council's Cultural Strategy: A Life Worth Living; and
- Thames Parks Plan [2004];
- Reading Public Art Strategy.







# 3. BASELINE UPDATE- STUDY AREA AND CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

# 3.1 Study area Context

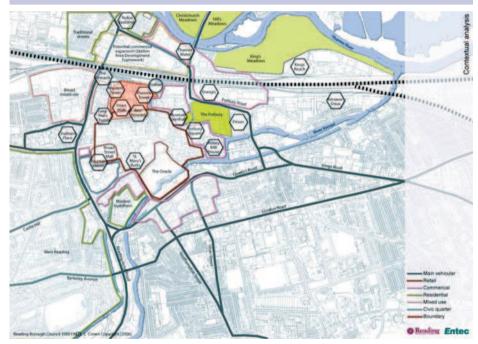


Figure 3.1: Contextual analysis

Reading city centre is an ever-changing urban landscape. Major areas for change have been identified as part of Reading Borough Council's strategy for the future – the Reading 2020 Vision and its subsequent updates. As part of this work and further studies, key areas of significant change have been identified in the city centre. Station Hill South (the land stretching from Station Hill to Friar Street across Garrard Street and from Station Road to Greyfriars Road) represents one of these areas and is considered as a 'key gateway' to the city.

The study area currently serves as a major transport interchange, juxtaposed between the Railway Station (one of the busiest mainline stations outside Central London), the bus interchange and the pedestrianised areas of Broad Street and The Oracle. It is home to a variety of retail, leisure and commercial uses, as well as a car park with a capacity for approximately 1,000 vehicles.

# 3.2 Study area Context

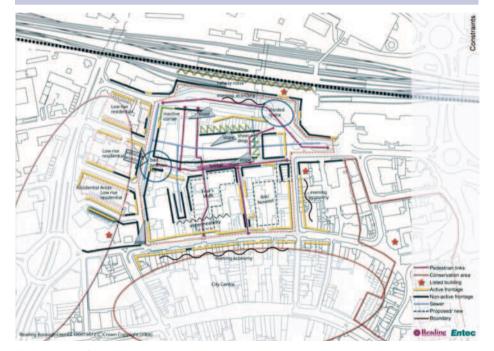


Figure 3.2: Constraints

As with most inner city brownfield areas, the study area is subject to a large number of constraints.







### **Uses**

Over recent years, there has been an increase in the number of closed and vacant buildings and sites in this area. Structures such as the ABC Cinema have been demolished (replaced with the recently completed Novotel and Ibis hotel and apartment development) and consent has been granted for a 22-storey mixed use development on Station Road adjacent to Thames Tower. Further, a sale of a major parcel of land fronting Reading Station to local developers Sackville Properties (Reading) Ltd has taken place.

Hence, the pressure for redevelopment is significant, as other parcels of this area of town feature vacant structures within a small number of ownerships, and the major retail mall in the area (Friars Walk) remains closed with planning consent.

### Levels

The study area is bowl-shaped. There is little change in absolute ground level between the Station forecourt and the corner of Friar Street and Greyfriars Road. However, a five-metre level change occurs in the centre of

the study area. In this area, the rears of properties slope steeply into the bowl with sheer drops behind shops on Station



Figure 3.3: Vacant BT building



Figure 3.4: Sheer drop

Approach, Station Road and the Thames Tower.

The steepest slopes are towards the east of Garrard Street, the south of Greyfriars Road and the west of Station Hill. Friars Walk is currently connected across Garrard Street at a high level, which creates a tunnel effect in the centre of Garrard Street.



The majority of building edges and corners along Garrard Street are blank, with exposed walls either along street



Figure 3.5: Tunnel Garrard Street

level or the whole building height. The street is also fragmented by frequent breaks between buildings, which allow for rear access and servicing.

A substantial break in the built form is caused by the former bus depot and the Bingo Hall, which extends through to Station Hill to create a large area of inactive frontage.

# Divided space/ bad junction layout

The station area is divided by (camera and bus lane restricted) through traffic that limits pedestrian flow. The junction layout at Greyfriars Road and Garrard Street is unclear with ambiguous road markings and wasted corner opportunities.



Figure 3.6: Former Bus Station







## **Impermeability**

The study area is mostly impermeable in a north-south direction. Pedestrian accessibility to Garrard Street is only possible through Merchants Place, Friars Walk on an elevated level, or below the former bus depot. Of these routes, only Merchants Place could be considered accommodating and not hostile to the pedestrian.



Figure 3.7: Junction Garrard Street/ Greyfriars Road

### **Sewer**

The Developer's investigations on the site have identified the existence of a main sewer (1150 x 750mm in diameter) on the site running in a west to east direction. Excavation and foundation works will be affected by the sewer that runs at a depth of 4 to 10 meters on a line continuous with Stanshawe Road and Station Approach.

# Historic buildings and character areas

These are discussed further below. However, the original station building is of Grade II listed status, as is the Great Western 'Malmaison' Hotel on Station Road. There are specific areas of character housing to the west of the study area as well as the Grade I listed Greyfriars Church accessed off Friar Street. Other historic character areas extend to the east along Friar Street and include the Victorian Town Hall and Queen Victoria Street.

# **Archaeology**

It should be noted that the brief area is within an area of high archaeological potential, with strong potential for encountering significant archaeological remains. If significant remains are discovered, preservation in-situ will be considered as part of any redevelopment design, as appropriate.







# 3.3 Character Areas

### 3.3.1 Historic context

From the mid-18th century onwards, Reading began to flourish as an important centre of trade between Bath and London. Inns flourished and regular public coaches began in 1780. New industries subsequently developed, most notably, brewing, brick, iron-founding, and boat-building, helped by the completion of the Kennet Canal in 1723 and the Kennet and Avon Canal in 1810.

Up until this period, development in the town centre was focused towards the South, away from the River Thames at Caversham. The study area remained undeveloped and originally, was an open field adjoining Portman Brook to the north and the rear of gardens to properties fronting Friar Street.

With the construction of the station around 1840, the town underwent rapid development and expansion, both industrially and in terms of residential development.

Greyfriars Road, Vachel Road and Garrard Street were all constructed at this time, as did the thoroughfare which was to become Station Hill.

The study area remained predominantly open land until the late 1800's when development encroached into the western parts of the area off Greyfriars Road and the livery stables adjacent to the station. In the mid-20th century, the centre of Reading was redeveloped. Areas of the historic core of the town were demolished to provide offices and shopping precincts. The construction of the Inner Distribution Road (the A4155), which started in 1969, improved traffic circulation but divided the town in half.

After the 1960's, the study area underwent substantial changes and was developed to the built form seen today. The surviving buildings originating from the 1930's form the historic context. These buildings include the station (Grade II listed - now The Three Guineas Public House), a hotel (No. 20 Station Road, Grade II listed - formerly known as the Great Western House) on the junction of Station Road / Station Approach and Forbury Road, and lastly, the development fronting Greyfriars Road to the West.

There are also a number of listed buildings and structures in close proximity to the study area that front Friar Street (Greyfriars Church Grade I listed No 39, and No's 11 to 15 Grade II listed buildings) and Station Road (No 13 and 25 and Great Western House, see above). In addition, the statue of King Edward VII (Grade II listed), is sited opposite the station. The Market Place/London Street Conservation Area, is situated to the east and south of Blagrave Street.

Areas and buildings of significance that development in the area south of Station Hill might affect can be summarised as:

- Greyfriars Church;
- The Station Building;
- Great Western Hotel; and
- Views from Market Place and St. Lawrence's Church.







# 3.3.2 Local character (character areas and their component character elements)

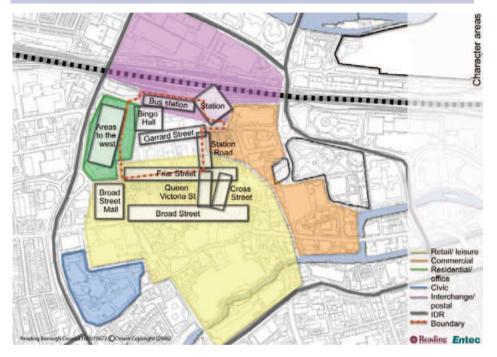


Figure 3.8: Character Areas

The character of the built environment is varied and complex. The built form ranges from an historic centre based around a 13th Century Abbey and the Victorian Town Hall, through the post-war expansion of residential areas and industrial estates, to a modern business location, typified by high-quality office buildings in the city centre and business parks in the South West. Reading Borough has over 880 listed properties, 13 Conservation Areas, 2 Local Nature Reserves and 45 Wildlife Heritage Sites.

### Areas to the South

Within recent years, the main shopping and leisure areas in Reading have experienced a Southern shift along Broad Street, The Oracle and the Broad Street Mall.

Broad Street is a lively and popular pedestrianised street with semi-mature plane trees, public art and street furniture. The street boasts Victorian or Georgian architectural style buildings coupled with new developments such as The Oracle. Shop frontages are of improved quality due to the occupancy of many primary, established retail tenants.

Recently the Broad Street Mall, a large indoor shopping mall situated at the west end of Broad Street, has undergone a major refurbishment. It is often used as the main access route to the adjacent Civic Centre and the Hexagon Theatre, which are both sited in an exposed environment with hard concrete finishes.



Friar Street, which underwent recent improvements to integrate



Figure 3.9: Broad Street



Figure 3.10: Friar Street







pedestrian, bus and cycle movements, represents a wide streetscape dominated by disabled parking, servicing and limited bus stops. The streetscape does not offer many opportunities for soft landscaping and attractive architectural details are limited to a few examples. The loss of the 1930's cinema façade was a disappointment to local groups.

Several buildings do not stick to a historic building line. Friars Walk is set back several metres and other structures include recessed entrances canopies and blank facades, which denigrates the integrity of the street.

Many premises are either vacant or occupied by secondary uses, including value shopping or charity shops. The streetscape is dominated by mainly four to six storeys high, broad 80's retail/office buildings, along with a select number of isolated narrow two to three storey high buildings. In the near future, the character of the street is likely to change with the completion of the considerably scaled new hotel/ residential development.

Union Street, Queen Victoria Street and Cross Street connect Friar Street with Broad Street. Union Street is a narrow pedestrian link. The narrow street, also labelled as the 'Smelly Alley', mainly has two-storey high buildings with small shops such as fruit or fish stalls, eateries and secondary entrances into stores along Broad Street. It offers one of the few locations for a more 'characterful' shopping experience in the town, but suffers significantly from standing water and poor streetscape. The street has been further undermined by the closure of Boots the Chemist's entrance onto the space.

Queen Victoria Street and Cross Street are good examples of quality Victorian architecture with an abundance of terracotta detailing. Queen Victoria Street especially provides a consistent, uniform architectural statement. Streetscape enhancements in these two streets have been especially successful, and both streets can benefit from continuous frontage.

### **Areas to the East**

Areas to the east mainly include larger office blocks with limited on-street activity However, recent developments such as Forbury Square and the restoration of Forbury Gardens has increased and enhanced the quality and accessibility of open spaces within the area.

### **Areas to the North**

Interchange areas to the north pose as a barrier to pedestrians and appear, despite recent improvements to the bus stops, unsafe and unwelcoming.



Figure 3.11: Union Street

The streetscape at Station Hill and the station forecourt is dominated by vehicular traffic, which restricts pedestrian flows. Shops along Station Hill are primarily secondary retail uses with neglected frontages. Towards the west of Station Hill, the Bingo Hall and former bus station entrances along with poorly conceived office buildings illustrate problematic and strong changes in ground level. These buildings are also representative of poorly defined spaces and edges.

Areas to the east of Station Hill, in front of the station, are of low quality paving material and contain substandard cycle parking and signage. As a whole, this area of inactive frontages creates no sense of place for pedestrians.



Figure 3.12: Station Hill







### **Areas to the West**

Roads to the west of Greyfriars Road, such as Sackville Street, Vachel, Stanshawe and Tudor Road are land-locked by the IDR. Overall, the area is

considered isolated and unrelated to Station Hill or the city centre. The roads are predominantly nothrough routes, aligned with Victorian low-rise residential terraces or smaller commercial blocks.



The study area

The environment of the study area is very urban. It has uncharismatic,

Figure 3.13: Stanshawe Road

convoluted, hard surfaced spaces and does not display the quality of integrated mixed uses.

Garrard Street is perceived as an intimidating environment and is therefore underused as a pedestrian route. Due to the lack of active and attractive building frontages onto the street, the area currently provides little more than vehicular access to the existing car parks, which are all dark and unpleasant to use.

The limited pedestrian movement across the area and high number of vacant, disused buildings heightens the perception of crime.



Figure 3.14: Study area

3.3.3 Hostile edges, 'bad-neighbour' uses and areas of positive aspect

### Station interchange

The station interchange is a divided space that does not provide any active uses at its entrance. The station forecourt is an unwelcoming, hard landscape with few distinctive uses or features. The area has benefited from a recent interim upgrade but the requirement to provide space for movement for passengers severely limits opportunities to improve the overall area outside a major upgrade. Cycle parking, steel guardrails and concrete fencing detract from the entrance, which prevents people from crossing the street other than at prefixed areas.

Thames Tower, the small pavilion and former pub opposite the station forecourt create a non-distinctive space and further exposes inactive frontages.

# **Greyfriars Road area**

Greyfriars Road is unattractive and neglected. Buildings are mainly inactive on the ground floor with dark windows and indistinct building façades that are very inconsistent in shape both vertically and horizontally. Steeply

sloping at the southern end, a poor junction and street layout all restrict movement, resulting in limited travel opportunities in the area. The space at the northern end of Greyfriars Road, where it meets Station Hill, lacks open space hierarchy with unresolved corners, various building scales, inactive frontages and restrictive pedestrian crossing.



Figure 3.15: Front of Thames Tower







### The study area

The distances between buildings in the study area are inconsistent. In particular, Friar Street and Garrard Street have various underused and undefined spaces between buildings that are used to service the buildings or access parking areas. Unoccupied buildings, associated service yards and back facades mainly relate to Garrard Street.



Figure 3.16: Fronts along Greyfriars Road

The car parking areas located within the study area are threatening with dark, run-down access points that are poorly lit. A quarter of Garrard Street is covered by Friars Walk, which creates an intimidating, gloomy passage. Merchants Place is an important link that illustrates stark contrasts in scale and height to the surrounding buildings. The inconsistent building width, building setbacks, inactive frontages and corners create an undefined, negative space. Equally, the informal pedestrian link through the former bus depot represents a similar

environment.



Figure 3.17: Gap Friars Walk/BT Building

# 3.3.4 Orientation of the fronts and backs of buildings adjoining the study area

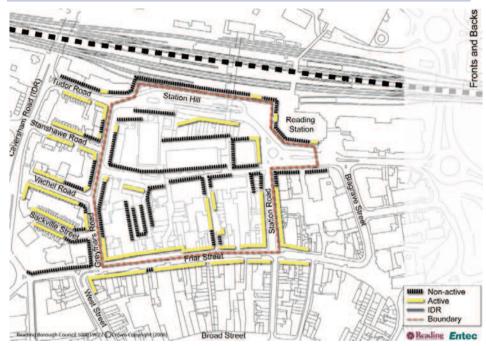


Figure 3.18: Fronts and backs

### **Thames Tower**

Thames Tower, built to face the station and Station Road to the east, creates an 11-storey vertical façade (concrete wall) along Garrard Street and to the west. Much of the structure is surrounded by railings and the interface with the street is poor.

# **Station Interchange**

The majority of uses within the station building are orientated internally, which creates blank walls along the expanse of the exterior wall of the





building. The exception is 'the three guineas' pub (the entrance fronting the station forecourt) and the two station entrances.

# **Greyfriars Road area**

With the exception of a number of corner buildings that occupy public houses, the majority of buildings along Greyfriars Road and the Pinnacle building opposite the north east corner of the study area present inactive façades along the ground floors. Office buildings are



Figure 3.19: Thames Tower

accessed from Greyfriars Road, which creates a limited extent of activity to their frontage. However, most of the office buildings are dominated by continuous darkened openings, indistinctive features, inactive ground floor uses and high blank walls along the street.

### **Friar Street**

Friar Street to the south fronts the public realm with predominantly active retail and leisure uses.



Figure 3.20: Front of Pinnacle building



Figure 2.204 Front of Disposes building







# 3.4 Movement

# 3.4.1 Existing vehicular movement (car, bus, taxi)

The study area is located in a highly accessible location close to Reading Railway Station and associated major bus interchanges.

Historically, the study area has formed a single, large block in the city centre, which creates an obstacle for effective east-west and north-south movement. Subsequently, both pedestrian and vehicular traffic accessibility have been relocated onto other peripheral routes.

Friar Street and Station Road operate a reduced traffic policy for bus and taxi access during the peak hours of the day.

The Council hopes to introduce a Mass Rapid Transport system (MRT) that will serve the wider Reading area. A designated stop accommodated within the study area, would provide close proximity to the bus and rail interchange.

# 3.4.2 Existing pedestrian lines around and through the study area (nodes, key spaces)

Main pedestrian movements around the study area are along Station Road, Friar Street and along Greyfriars Road and Station Hill. Station Road functions as the main access to the shopping/ leisure areas to the south but narrow footways make the street inadequate to cope with the high pedestrian movements during peak times. Greyfriars Road and Station Hill primarily connect to the residential and office areas to the East.

The study area is immediately adjacent to the station and benefits as an informal through route for pedestrians. However in practical terms, only the

study area's periphery is navigable as the aerial walkway into Friars Walk is closed and the derelict, unlit bus station frequently vandalised as well as not being a legal right of way.

East to west movement through the study area is confined to Garrard Street, which currently serves as the only access to the 1,000 space NCP car park and sub-navigates a 50m stretch of the closed Friars Walk shopping centre. Garrard Street allows access to Friar Street via Merchants Place and to Station Hill through the redundant bus depot and along the elevated walkways, which formerly accessed Friars Walk.

### 3.4.3 Pedestrian desire lines

The study area currently restricts fully permeable movement in all directions.

Merchants Place, which links the study area to Friar Street, further along Union and Chain Street to Broad Street and The Oracle, ceases at Garrard Street and forces pedestrians to exit the study area to the West or East, therefore restricting direct access to the railway station.

The frequency of pedestrians using the redundant bus depot illustrates the demand for a second north-south link through the study area. The only other link to the south of the study area is the currently closed Friars Walk, which only allows through pedestrian movement at an elevated level.

Unfortunately, the study area generally obstructs direct links to the station.



Figure 3.22: Pedestrian desire lines







# 3.4.4 Wider cyclist network

Station Hill, Station Road and Greyfriars Road all provide in-carriageway cycle lanes. However these do not currently link to the West before the onset of the Oxford Road. A network of 'Quiet Roads' exists radiating outside of the Borough, although the cycle network is incomplete and dedicated cycle lanes exist in the main only along the Portman Road, A33, Wokingham Road and a limited section of the Henley Road.

There are no cycle paths immediately through the study area.

# 3.4.5 Transport Statement

The study area should be developed in compliance with the wider Local Transport Plan strategy as set out in the current provisional document, that will be superseded by the second full Local Transport Plan (2006-2011) due to be published in March 2006. The Central Area Action Plan within the LTP2 provides the framework for transport strategy and provision within the central Reading area. Preferred and alternative MRT routes are shown in the Local Transport Plan, including a preferred MRT route option running along Greyfriars Road and Garrard Street.

Information providing statistical support and the Action Plan can be made available from Transport Strategy, which includes details of the Accessibility Strategy.







# 3.5 Topography

Reading is located at the confluence of the River Thames and River Kennet with the town occupying the floor of the River Thames and River Kennet valleys at approximately 35 to 40 metres Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The land rises steeply to the north towards the south facing slopes of the Chiltern Hills at between 75 and 80 metres AOD with Caversham and Caversham Heights occupying the northern sides of the River Thames valley floor and valley sides. To the south of the River Thames the valley floor gently undulates between 35 to 50m AOD with the land rising to the West to 90m AOD at Tilehurst, gently rising to the south to about 80m AOD at Whitley Wood whilst to the East Earley and Woodley occupy low lying undulating areas between the River Thames and Loddon River flood plain at about 60m AOD. The site lies within the built up area of Reading close to the station which is at about 45m AOD. The highest point on the site adjoins the plaza with the ground falling west and south west by about 7 to 8 metres to a low point at the corner of Garrard Street/Hill and Grevfriars Road forming a bowl-shaped area of land between Station Hill and the Bus terminal, and Garrard Street/Hill.

# 3.6 Open space and (urban) landscape

3.6.1 Important landscape features, areas and their settings

The study area itself is devoid of any green space. However, major spaces exist on the periphery of the site, within walking distance:

# **Forbury Gardens**

The nearest area of green space, Forbury Gardens, is situated to the East. These gardens are registered with English Heritage as a Park and Garden of Historic Interest. The Gardens are an example of a formal Victorian garden

with a pond fountain, bandstand and home of the famous Maiwand Lion statue. The walled gardens form a peaceful retreat within the busy office quarter of Reading with access from Forbury Road,

### **Abbey Ruins**

The Forbury and Abbotts Walk. The gardens are linked to Abbey Ruins and Chestnut Walk and provide a connection to the River Kennet and the Kennet and Avon Canal to the East. The gardens have recently been restored using monies from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The ruins of Reading Abbey are located in an attractive setting on the banks of the Kennet and Avon Canal to the west and south of Reading HM Prison. The green space comprises of lawns and walkways within a tranquil area of Reading, which provides seating areas and a quiet retreat. The Abbey ruins are designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument and therefore the ruins and their setting are statutorily protected.

### **Riverside Meadows**

To the north of the study area and the Great Western Railway following the River Thames, lies a ribbon of green space that is almost entirely free of development, and to most of which the public has free access. These open spaces along the Thames consist of a number of parks or gardens that extend from Scours Lane in the west to Kings Meadow and Coal Woodland in the East to form part of the Thames Park Plan. The string of parks consists of:

- northern bank from west to east: Caversham Court Gardens, Christchurch Meadows and Hill Meadows; and
- southern bank from east to west: The Coal woodland, Kings Meadows, The Thames Promenade and Rivermead and parts of Scours Lane.

There are open panoramic views towards the study site from Kings Meadows.







# 3.7 Skyline

# 3.7.1 Established scale and building heights

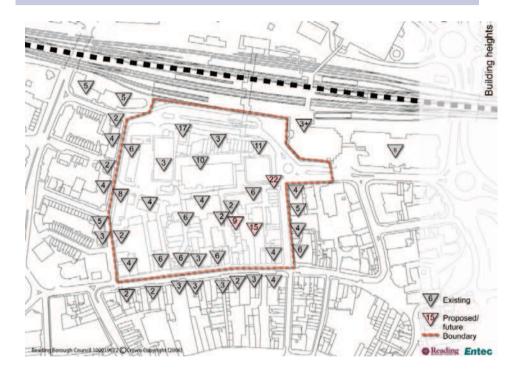


Figure 3.23: Building heights

### **Areas to the South**

Existing building heights and scales in the retail and leisure areas vary considerably. Currently, existing buildings are between two- to six-storeys high. However, new developments along Friar Street and Station Road will be built with up to 22 storeys in height.

### **Areas to the West**

Greyfriars Road and streets to the East differ in scale and height, with the main proportion of residential uses being two-to three-storeys high and commercial uses up to five-storeys. The contrast between the uses lies largely in their overall width and floor to ceiling heights, where commercial uses significantly dominate over residential.

### **Areas to the East**

Although new development of 14 and 16 storeys is planned at Kings Point and Abbey Mill House, this area of the city centre has a currently uniform mass with a number of large structure such as the 8 storey Apex Plaza adjacent to the station



Figure 3.24: Building heights to the south

forming the major landmarks. Much of the area around Blagrave Street to the Forbury contains buildings of 5/6 storeys, culminating in the new Forbury Square building at 6 storeys. Further eastwards the topography drops down with even large buildings not

forming particularly memorable features on the skyline.

# The study area

The study area contains the tallest structures in the town centre, with Western Tower, at 17 storeys. The Novotel development will reach 15 storeys once completed and the Thames Tower at 12 storeys



Figure 3.25: Building heights to the west







reportedly has consent for 3 additional storeys. The mean development height of other structures in the area is approximately 5 to 6 storeys.

Largely, the study area is inconsistent in scale and height and dominated by the highly visible Thames Tower and Western Tower. The scale of buildings differs from small to large and building heights vary from 2 to 17 storeys increasing up to 22 storeys. Consequently,



Figure 3.26: Building heights study area

adjacent buildings contrast with each other greatly and present the area with an inconsistent built form.

# 3.7.2 Landmark buildings

### Western Tower/Thames Tower

The study area hosts Reading's tallest existing building, 'Western Tower',

with 17 storeys and the Thames
Tower with 11 storeys, opposite the
station entrance. Thames Tower
was granted planning permission in
December 2005 to erect an
additional three storeys and change
uses on ground floor to commercial
uses.



Figure 3.27: Skyline Thames Tower

### Hotel/ residential building

Friar Street and Merchants Place have recently witnessed the completion of a 15 storey hotel/residential building, which is a noticeable recent addition to the skyline of Reading.

Figure 3.28: Skyline Station Road

### **Residential building**

There is planning consent for a 22storey residential building with ground

floor retail and/or food and drink units along Station Road. This building will mostly be visible from Forbury Road, the station area and Friar Street.

# 3.7.3 Vertical/horizontal rhythm

Generally, the built form in the area lacks a defined rhythm, aside from the Station Hill frontage and character areas such as Queen Victoria Street. Building heights vary from 2 storeys to 17 storeys, with building heights of 6 or 8 storeys neighbouring 2-storey high buildings. Built form varies from townhouses (infill or terrace buildings e.g. along Friar Street) over long

rectangular shaped blocks (offices or parking e.g. within the study area or along Greyfriars Road) to heavy square boxes (e.g. the Thames Tower). This creates a fairly randomised horizontal and vertical rhythm throughout the area. Existing facades are mainly repetitive especially with newer build structures.



Figure 3.29: Horizontal/vertical rhythm







# 3.8 Views

# 3.8.1 Important local views

The study area is highly noticeable as a landmark site when passing through or entering Reading by rail. Taller buildings within the area are locally, highly visible from the station, station platforms and bus interchange to the North, from the IDR to the West and along Forbury Road to the East. Visibility from the South is not possible due to the topography of the study area.

# 3.8.2 Views into and through the study area

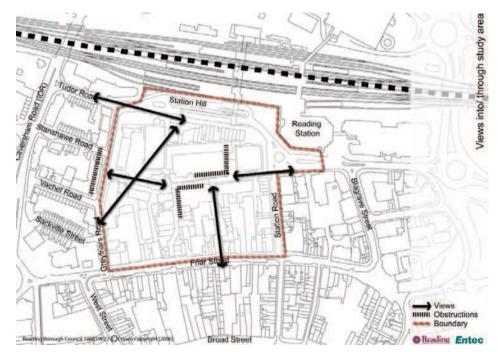


Figure 3.30: views into / through site

Views into and through the study area are currently very restricted or obstructed and generally end in non-focal points or non-distinct aspects such as blank facades.

### **View from Tudor Road**

Approaching the study area from the West along Tudor Road the Western Tower and the northern



Figure 3.31: View from Tudor Road

facades of the Bingo Hall are highly visible.



Figure 3.32: View from Greyfriars Road

# The study area

Merchants Place ceases as a main pedestrian link with the view of a parking garage façade. Garrard Street terminates on an unattractive 90's office façade to the West and looks up to the sky in the East.

# **View from Greyfriars Road**

The Western Tower is highly visible if viewing the study area from the junction of Greyfriars Road and Sackville Street.



Figure 3.33: View from Merchants Place





# 3.8.3 Wider views



Figure 3.34: sketch existing skyline

Views towards the Station Hill site are strongly influenced by the existing built-up areas of the town and local topography. An assessment of the visibility of the study area, the existing visual envelope and the area that the development will potentially be visible from has been carried out. Further, a series of photographs has been taken to illustrate the nature and extent of the views towards the centre of Reading. To the North, views towards the site can be obtained from locations at Balmore Park, sections of Peppard Road, BBC at Caversham Park, Donkin Hill, and sections of the Henley Road to the north east and numerous locations adjoining the River Thames. Partial views towards the site can also be obtained from section of the A4 near the Volvo roundabout at Woodley, Green Road in Earley, the A327 near Whitley Pump, and A33 near the Rose Kiln Lane roundabout.

The existing skyline of Reading is perceived in the majority of views from the above locations. This comprises generally a uniform wide spreading roofline of low rise buildings set at approximately 6 to 9 storeys in height with a cluster of taller buildings punctuating the horizon and rising up to 15 storeys located within the centre of Reading close to the station and Reading Bridge.

In addition, there are a smaller number of isolated tall buildings dispersed to the East (Kings Point) and West (Tower blocks South of Prospect Park). The existing roofline of Reading is generally horizontal and wide spreading, which reflects the low lying undulating topography of the settlement.

Western Tower and Thames Tower adjoining the site are clearly visible on the horizon with Western Tower forming a landmark structure (and to a lesser degree Thames Tower), whilst the other buildings and structures within the site contribute little to the overall skyline. The existing tall buildings located close to the station provide a focus for views towards Reading City Centre especially from locations along the north side of the river, although the heights of these buildings are relatively moderate and the horizontal nature of the skyline dominates. The removal of Western Tower as part of the redevelopment of the site will result in the loss of a local landmark building and therefore the focus of views to the centre of Reading will be reduced.

The redevelopment of the site provides an opportunity to increase the heights of buildings close to the station emphasising its role as a transport interchange and the commercial heart of the town.







Landmark structures would have a significant effect on the existing low-rise, wide spreading roofline of Reading.

A family of taller buildings would require a careful balancing of height and mass to create a successful relationship with the surrounding townscape.



Figure 3.35

Figure 3.35 has been taken from the top of an open field in Caversham Park adjoining the south of the BBC's Listed Monitoring Station and grounds.

This view illustrates the nature and extent of the views towards Reading town centre with Thames Tower and Western Tower (occupying the study area) clearly visible on the horizon.

Figure 3.36 has been taken from a pedestrian crossing on the A4 near the Woodley/Bulmershe (Volvo) Roundabout. To the right of the view are residential houses fronting the A4 with the built-up areas of the centre of Reading and beyond. Reading Bridge House is seen above the houses centre right. However, the Station Road site would be partially screened by



Figure 3.36



houses and existing vegetation but the proposed development is likely to be visible.

Figure 3.37 has been taken from Green Road, off the Wokingham Road looking in a north west direction over the car park areas to Parkhill surgery, which is seen in the foreground. Beyond in the middle ground are open playing fields, Reading College and School of Arts. Thames Tower to the centre left and Great Western Tower on the centre right can be seen on the horizon and merging as part of the distant view of the city centre skyline.





Figure 3.37



Figure 3.38

town centre from the Whitley Pump. The Pheasant Pub is seen in the central mid-ground beyond, with views towards Reading town centre with the Western Tower (occupying the study area) and Thames Tower to the righthand side of the photograph visible from this vantage point. Part of the roofscape to the Oracle development is also visible to the left of Great Western Tower.

Figure 3.39 has been taken from the A33 Rose Kiln Lane roundabout looking north. To the left is the entrance to the Thames Water pumping station and on the right is Rose Kiln Lane. The photograph illustrates the partial view of the built up areas of Reading in the River Kennet flood plain with distant views towards Great Western Tower and the study area clearly visible above





Figure 3.39

the A33 road alignment forming an important view on the approach to Reading town centre.

Figure 3.40 has been taken from The Horse Close, Caversham. This is a south west facing panoramic view with the existing Horse Close dominating the foreground with views beyond extending towards the River Thames and Reading City Centre. Existing vegetation restricts the view towards Reading centre but Thames Tower, Western Tower and Reading Bridge House are partially visible on the horizon formed by distant hills.

Figure 3.41 show views from the junction of Lower Henley Road and Henley Road (A4155) and illustrates the nature and extent of the views towards the centre of Reading. The view is framed by development along Lower Henley Road, looking in a south west direction with Western Tower and Thames



Figure 3.40



Figure 3.41

Tower buildings just perceived to the centre left of the photograph. Figure 3.42 has been taken from the Caversham Vastern Road roundabout looking in a south easterly direction. To the right side of the view is TGI Friday's whilst to the left hand side of the view is the Postal Sorting Office, where the upper storeys of the Thames Tower and Western Tower can clearly be seen.



Figure 3.42

Figure 3.43 is taken from an elevated location within Balmore Park to the north of the River Thames and puts the study area in context with the surrounding area. Existing vegetation within the Park (seen in the foreground) frames the views south towards the centre of Reading. Thames Tower and Western Tower are clearly visible on



Figure 3.43

the horizon with the topography and vegetation focusing views towards these buildings.









Figure 3.44

Figure 3.44 has been taken from the junction of Prospect Street, Peppard Road (B481) and Henley Road (A4155) looking in a southerly direction down Westfield Road. It illustrates the nature and extent of the views from this busy junction, which is dominated by the foreground uses. Thames Tower to the east side of the study area is just perceived above the properties fronting the west side of Westfield Road but Great Western Tower is screened.

Figure 3.45 is a localised view taken from a location close to the Reading Bridge round-a-bout just north east of the station car park. The photographs illustrate the nature and extent of the views from



Figure 3.45

this important approach to Reading City Centre. Western Tower and Thames Tower are clearly visible in both views and form part of the varied skyline that surrounds Reading Station.



Figure 3.46





Figure 3.46 is a view taken from Caversham Bridge looking south east. The photograph illustrates the nature and extent of the views towards the study area with Western Tower being clearly visible forming part of the skyline to Reading centre.



Figure 3.47

Figure 3.47 is a view taken from the Thames War Memorial near to Fry's Island looking across the river in a south eastward direction. Western Tower and Thames Tower are evident above the 4 storey dwellings that front the River.



Figure 3.48

Figure 3.48 is a view taken from Christchurch Meadows looking southwards. To the left is Reading Bridge House and the new Thames Water offices adjoining the River Thames, whilst to the right hand side of the photograph is the view westwards across the open playing fields towards Fry's Island. Thames Tower and Great Western Tower are seen centre right of the photograph forming a notable highpoint in the skyline of Reading centre.





Figure 3.49

Figure 3.49 is the view obtained from Kings Meadow near Caversham Lock looking in a westward direction. Reading Bridge House is behind the trees to the right hand side of the photograph. In the centre of the view is the built up areas that forms the station area of Reading, with Thames Tower and Western Tower perceived as buildings of a similar height to the existing adjoining development and having a limited effect on the skyline.

Figure 3.50 is a panoramic view taken from the Thames Path on the edge of Kings Meadow near Coal Woodland looking in a westward direction. To the left hand side of the view is the new Kings Oak development (with sloping roofline), whilst to the right hand side is seen housing fronting the River at Heron's Island. Thames Tower is clearly visible in the centre of the photograph whilst Great Western Tower is partially obscured by mature trees and existing high rise development.



Figure 3.50



Figure 3.51

Figure 3.51 is also taken from the Thames Path at the western end of Thames Side Promenade and illustrates the extent of the views looking in a south easterly direction. Great Western Tower and Thames Tower are glimpsed through the open belt of trees adjoining the river at this point and form part of the distant skyline of Reading town centre.



Figure 3.52

Figure 3.52 is an open view taken from the playing fields near Rivermead Leisure centre. To the left hand side of the view is the belt of trees that adjoin the Thames Path and River, whilst to the right is The Rivermead Centre. Western Tower and Thames Tower are clearly visible on the distant horizon.







# 3.9 Land use

# 3.9.1 Existing land uses (horizontal/vertical)

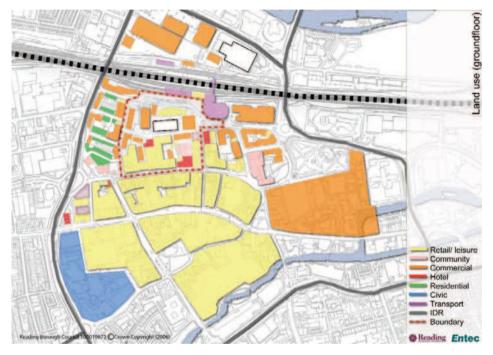


Figure 3.52: Land use ground floor

The area to the west of Station Hill comprises of low-rise residential terraces with some isolated under-occupied speculative office buildings, primarily constructed during the 90's and mainly fronting the IDR and Greyfriars Road.

To the south of Station Hill is the main shopping and leisure area of Reading with partially-pedestrianised and pedestrianised areas, which have experienced infrastructural regeneration in recent years.

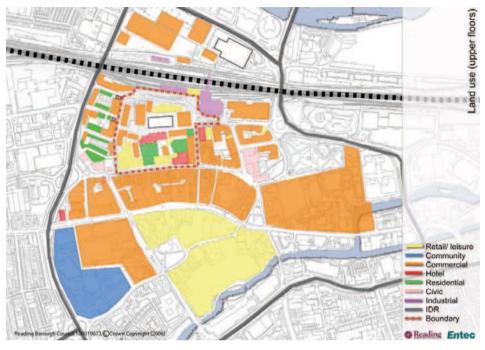


Figure 3.53: Land-use upper floor

Closest are Station Road, Friar Street and the side roads between Garrard

and Friar Street with secondary retail and leisure services. The main shopping and leisure areas are Broad Street (the main pedestrianised street), Broad Street Mall, The Oracle and the side roads between Friar Street and Broad Street. Other streets such as West Street offer discount shopping and Gun Street, St



Figure 3.54: Speculative Office







Mary's Butts, Bristol and West Arcade and Harris Arcade offer a mix of small specialist shops.

The area to the east of Station Hill, behind the adjacent Railway Station, is predominantly commercial in use. For example, this includes the Energis House (formerly Metal Box) along Forbury Road, the redeveloped One Forbury Square and



Figure 3.55: The Oracle

the proposed Abbey Mill House. The area also hosts the improved five-acre Forbury Gardens alongside the Mary's churchyard, the only substantial green space within the IDR.

To the north of Station Hill are the Bus Interchange and the railway line. The area north of the tracks currently accommodates mostly retail and post office shed building besides being a future area for potential commercial expansion.

The study area currently hosts a number of disparate uses ranging from occupied and redundant offices and low quality retail, through to a bingo hall and multi-storey car park for almost 1,000 cars.

In the 1980's, Reading started to introduce the theme of city centre living. On Friar Street/Merchants Place, new development comprises of two new hotels providing



Figure 3.56: One Forbury Square

around 360 bedrooms and 112 apartments over 14 floors (Spring 2006). Further proposals are to convert the first floor of the old Friar's Walk Shopping Centre and to create hotel and living uses as well as a residential 22 storey tall tower along Station Road.



Figure 3.57: Study area

3.9.2 Adjacent major developments (Source: Reading, Development and Investment Review 2005, Oct 2005)

Phase 1 of the new Chatham Street will comprise a mixed use development of 211 private units and 96 affordable/ key worker units, car parking, community use and retail/ leisure use.

Phase 2 will be a further mixed use development to include optional residential use of 0–143 units; B1 offices, a 100–200 bed hotel, flexible mixed 'Town Centre' uses at ground floor level, a public swimming pool and car parking. This phase of the development involves decking over the IDR, highway.

The Abbey Mill House site has been prepared for the development of a 15 storey office building in the backdrop of Forbury Square and the adjacent heritage buildings. Adjacent will be a separate residential building that provides a restaurant and eight floors of 32 key worker, shared ownership apartments above.

Outline permission for 535 new homes at Kenavon Drive was approved in May 2005.







# 4. PLACECHECK CONSULTATION

Placecheck is a method developed by Urban Design Alliance in the 1990s and is now widely used by professionals in assessing the characteristics of a place and deliberating what type of improvements are required. It is a highly flexible method which primarily consists of posing questions to the public about their perception of a particular space. The method is aimed at encouraging discussion between various stakeholders and subsequently, arriving at a shared vision for the area. It is an effective way to involve local communities and encourage working in collaboration to provide planning and design guidance. The Placecheck method has been employed to review development proposals and contribute to creating urban design frameworks, development briefs and design statements.

# 4.1 Stakeholder Consultation

Invitations were issued to all occupiers of the study area via a Council letter drop, 2 weeks before the stakeholder engagement event on the 6th of February. An estimated 45 persons attended the event to hear feedback on the emerging principles guiding the development of the area.

This feedback also covered in depth the contextual studies undertaken on behalf of the Council and followed with an opportunity for questions before pausing to collect feedback.

Invitees were given the option of filling questionnaires facilitated by the study team, or were able to take these away for completion and returned at a later date.

The majority of stakeholders opted to offer their feedback through the questionnaire method and informally discuss changes to the area with the study team. The analysis of the questionnaires was later processed on behalf of the Council using a real-count / percentages approach. It was discovered that there was a pattern of similar answers for each question and therefore, this was the favoured approach to analyze and represent the results.

Copies of the Placecheck questionnaires are available for inspection at the planning reception of the Council Offices in the Civic Centre or from the contacts listed at the back of this document.

In line with the Placecheck methodology, the two main "open" questions that were first asked were, "What do you like about this place?" and "What don't you like about this place?" Upon completion of the analysis, it showed that the responses from the stakeholders were fairly consistent and similarly, across all 23 questions.

When asked, "What do you like about this place?", the three main responses were:

- Good / nice restaurant and shopping [35%]
- Atmosphere during day and evening [17%]
- Nothing [17%]

When asked, "What don't you like about this place?", the three main responses were:

 State of dereliction / disrepair; litter issues [27%]

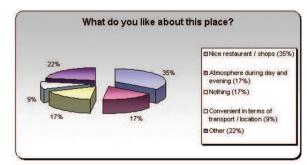


Figure 4.1: What do you like about this place







- Unsafe and dark streets; not enough lighting [20%]
- Unattractive buildings and architecture [16%]

When asked, "Are there particular uses or facilities you feel are missing in the area?" the three main responses were:

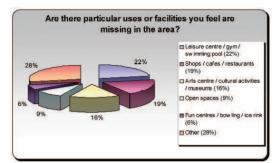


Figure 4.2: Are there particular uses or facilities you feel are missing in the area

- Leisure centre / gym / swimming pool [22%]
- Shops / cafes / restaurants [19%]
- Arts centre / cultural activities / museums [16%]

Figure 4.2: Are there particular uses or facilities missing in the area. When asked, "Is there anything that you feel would not be appropriate as part of any redevelopment?", the top four responses were:

- More pubs / clubs [35%]
- Car parking [18%]
- Excessive office space [12%]
- Low-value, cheap retail [12%]

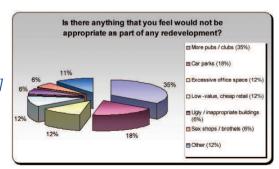


Figure 4.3: Is there anything you would feel is not appropriate as part of any redevelopment

# 4.2 Public Consultation

Public consultation using the Placecheck method was conducted on February 3rd, 2006 on-site from 8:00am to 4:30pm. The process was facilitated by three Entec assistant consultants, three MSc and PhD Development Planning candidates from the University of Reading, and participating members of the public. Each surveyor carried out a questionnaire at one of the six predetermined pitches around the site, targeting an ethnically diverse audience which covers commuters, older people, workers in the area, youth and university students. The aim of this exercise was to gauge perception of how the public perceived the site in its existing state and collect suggestions for future development.

The public was generally receptive to the questions asked during the Placecheck exercise and quite a number offered insightful comments that were specifically drawn from their personal experiences working or shopping in Reading.

Similarly with the stakeholder consultation, the two main "open" questions that were asked at the beginning of the survey which were meant to stimulate discussion were "What do you like about this place?" and "What don't you like about this place?" Upon completion of the analysis, it showed that the responses from the public were fairly consistent across the pitches and similarly, across all 15 questions.

When asked, "What do you like about this place?", the three main responses were:

- Nothing [23%]
- Place is convenient in terms of transport and location [15%]
- Good / nice restaurants and shopping [14%]





When asked, "What don't you like about this place?", the three main responses were:

- State of dereliction / disrepair; litter issues [27%]
- Unsafe and dark streets; not enough lighting [16%]
- Unattractive buildings and architecture [14%]

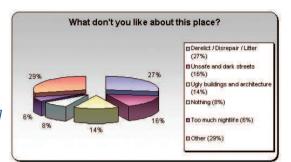


Figure 4.4: What don't you like about this place

When asked to rank a set of issues, how important do they think these aspects should be in any redevelopment of the area, the results were found to be quite consistent as well. The top aspects that were particularly thought to important were [in order]:

- Safety and security
- Cleanliness and maintenance of the environment
- Pedestrian access
- Access to public transportation
- Landscaping
- Linkage to other areas [e.g. The Oracle]
- Attractive and quality buildings
- Public open spaces

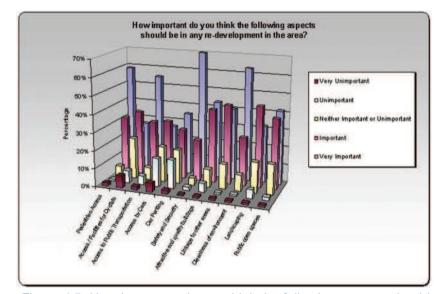


Figure 4.5: How important do you think the following aspects should be in any re-development in the area





# **APPENDICES**

# VISION WORKSHOP

Two internal consultation workshops were held with the Council, with a wide variety of representatives from transport, leisure, housing, planning (forward and development control), economic development and landscape services. In addition, the consultation team included the Crime Prevention Design Adviser from Thames Valley Police, the Director of Artists in the City and the Executive Director of the City Centre Management Company.

An initial objective setting workshop was used to determine aims and performance criteria for the study area. Following on from the analysis above and public consultation exercises, a second 'visioning' workshop was held to further refine planning and design principles for the area and ensure strategic fit with other Council initiatives.

The morning of the visioning workshop was used to present the findings of the first stages to the wider project group, especially focusing on the results and interpretation of analysis and stakeholder opinion, opportunities and significant constraints for the study area. This was followed by an interactive design session, stimulated by presenting four potential development scenarios:

- Three Streets Interchange;
- The Big Box;
- The Connected Cityscape;
- Destination Station Hill.

The second half of this event formed a visioning session with clear expectations on the participation and interaction with the invited partners. The aim was to develop and agree upon objectives for locations of open spaces, linkages, areas of concentration for development, levels of site

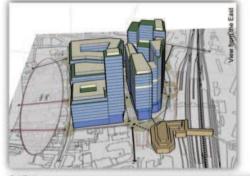


Figure 5.1



Second busiest mainline station outside Central London

Bus Interchange Station Hill

Serves as a major transport interchange, integrated with the Station foreco

Extension of bus stopping facilities along station approach IRT Stop Garrard Street

A planned Mass Rapid Transport (MRT) to serve the centre and the wider Reading context, with a stop within the study area

Other buses distributed to this area. Encouraging mixing of uses and activity on street level

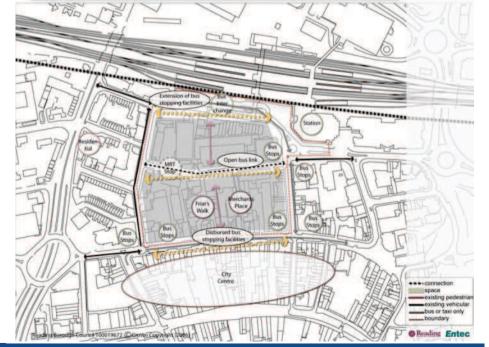
Mixed use double height space Bus Stops, Friar Street

Several Bus Stops serving the greater Reading Area and the Thames Valley

tation Road, Greyfriars Road

Accompdates bus travel in north south direction connecting to Station Hill/ IDR and Station Approach









# APPENDICES



Figure 5.2





Figure 5.3



- Northern access from Bus Interchange **Garrard Street**
- Retaining Garrard Street as main east west route through site MRT Stop
- · Access from Garrard Street (west) to MRT Stop
- Retaining access through Merchants Place to Garrard Street
- Reintroducing access through Friar's Walk over Garrard Stree



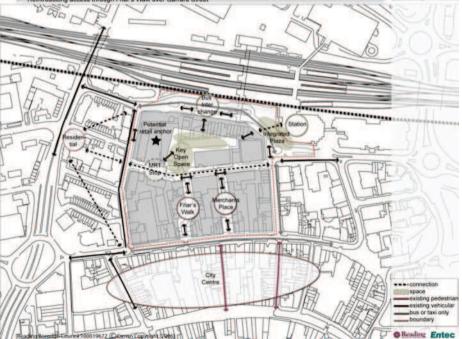


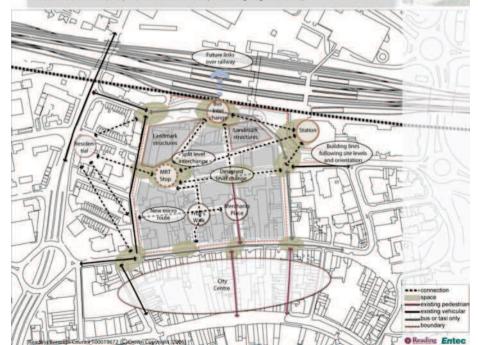


- Buildings and routes adapt to level change
- Several opportunities for landmark structures

### Smaller intimate block structure

- Permeable routes connecting to the Bus Interchange, MRT Stop and Garrard Street
- Bus Interchange Permeable access connecting to the Station, the MRT Stop, Garrard Street and Merchants Place
- Primary east-west route
- A strong pedestrian link from east to west, connecting surrounding areas, the MRT Stop and the Station New east-west micro routes
- Extended north South Routes
- Extending existing links such as Merchants Place and Friar's Walk to connecting and surrounding places
- **Garrard Street**
- Eastern and western access points to the area and a transport link integrating the MRT Stop







Entec







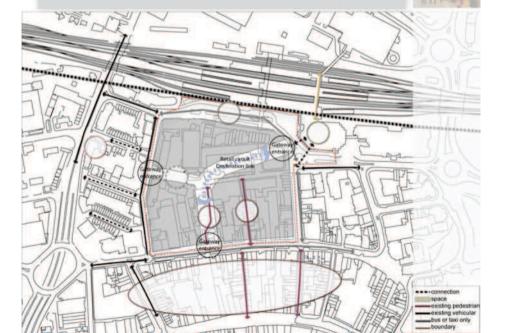


Retail

- Central indoor/ outdoor retail circuit
- Forms retail circuit with Station Hill/ Friar's Walk
- Residential
- Conveniently accessed and connected to adjacent residential areas to the west, walking to and from the stati Office

Office space conveniently located to transport interchange

- Substantial footprints capable of accomodating extant and new leisure user
- Open Space
- For residents, occupants and through traffic
- Major open space Valley on Sackville site
  Emphasis on Friar's Walk and Station Plaza entrances



sustainability to be achieved and a better understanding of how uses are to be mixed across the site. With the benefit of a wider understanding of the site in context, the study team began to map out potential scenarios for the development of the wider area, focusing on:

- Locations of tall buildings;
- Key open spaces;
- Linkages and access;
- Uses; and
- Fit with the surrounding cityscape.

Comments on the each of the four themes included:

# **Big Block Solution**

- Greyfriars Road requires strong frontage (visibility, activity);
- Relocation of food retail;
- Façade plaza station, gap and visibility;
- north of scheme, gap and visibility (up to Friar's Walk); and
- Friar Street pedestrianisation and accessibility.



### Three Street Interchange

- Garrard Street not providing additional link;
- Diagonal link through site;
- Focal point on Friar Street:
- Downplay reliance on MRT, rather integrate into open space; and
- Too many streets, competing role.

### **Destination Station Hill**

- Subdivision of big block;
- Corner Greyfriars Road and Station Hill strengthened;
- Gateway entrance shift MRT to end of Garrard Street towards Greyfriars Road:
- Visually link Merchants Place;
- Physically connect Merchant's Place to the station area without relying on mechanised methods of level change;
- Tall buildings focus around station (future surroundings);
- Station Gateway;
- Station Road to retain local retailers;
- Route railway to north, changes to block structure to accommodate links;

- Retail links should accommodate residential entrances: and
- · Garrard Street re-think service function.

### Connected cityscape

- To many possible ways to walk through or rather, too permeable:
- · How can car parking be achieved, e.g. wrapping car parking with activities;
- Importance of being within the area and being able to see were you are going (vistas);
- Building heights, possibility of landmark structures expand towards the West for landmarks?; and
- How can Merchants place be accommodated in terms of significant level changes.

# **Agreement on Key Principles**

The exercise was completed with the construction of a composite model that sought to define the key principles behind a vision for the study area. This has been taken forward to Part 1 of this study and captured as the vision statements and detail principles in Section 2 of Part 1. The key feedback favoured a scheme that included:

- Clarity of parameters for crossing of station plaza;
- Landmarks and focus of structure:
- A focused pedestrian area on Station Road;
- A Focal point along Friar Street;







- Resolved level changes at Merchants Place;
- Subdivided block structure;
- Visibility axes to the north;
- Flexibility of MRT stop, that should be relied upon as an anchor;
- No additional link along Garrard Street on street level except at Merchants Place:
- Possible relocation of Sainsbury's to Sackville site as anchor store;
- Controlled permeability, especially to the south west to counter (weakening of other routes);
- Strengthened frontage along Greyfriars Road; and
- Strengthened south west corner.

# 6. BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

In achieving and developing guidance for high quality design standards, it is desirable to provide an evidence base for examples, both in the UK and abroad, of reference studies that have encountered and resolved similar issues to the Station Hill South study area.

The following examples illustrate techniques that could be brought to bear in the re-development of the study area. Key lessons or aspects of each project is identified through imagery and highlighted in bold text.

# 6.1.1 The Bullring, Birmingham

The overall configuration and levels of the built form uses the natural 19.5m fall between New Street/High Street and the newly refurbished markets to establish a sequence of pedestrian open spaces and streets on different levels.



Figure 6.1: Sequence of streets and spaces, The Bullring, Birmingham



Figure 6.2: Different levels, The Bullring, Birmingham







# 6.1.2 Exchange Square, Manchester

A key element of the space is the change in level, around one storey, between The Triangle at the lower level and Selfridges at the upper level. To cope with this, the square has been divided into two plazas: a main plaza outside of the Selfridges store and a much smaller plaza in front of the Triangle.



Figure 6.3: Two squares, Exchange Square, Manchester

# 6.1.3 Kleiner Schlossplatz, Stuttgart

The urban re-orientation within the centre of Stuttgart reversed the principles of an auto fair city from the 60's when parts of the Schlossplatz were covered to allow for through traffic to the north and creating impermeable barriers through introducing big level changes. The redevelopment project placed a new art gallery directly in the area where level



Figure 6.4: Level Changes, Kunstmuseum, Stuttgart

changes were strongest and created, supported by a bundle of outside staircases and plateaus facilitating a permeable layout.

# 6.1.4 'De Beurstraverse'. Rotterdam

Passing underneath a disruptive traffic artery, the new Beursplein shopping and residential district has revitalized and unified the major shopping districts of Rotterdam, creating an energetic heart for an inner city that had been bombed and destroyed during World War II. Unifying and animating the city centre, this 300metre-long half open tunnel that meanders from the Lijnbaan towards the Hoogstraat, crossing the Coolsingel underground shopping street offers easy access to and from the surrounding market districts. High-quality retail space has replaced what had been an outdated, largely deserted shopping district. To engage the full fabric of city life, a 30-story residential tower creates a 24-hour urban core. In 1998, the project won an 'Award for Urban Design Excellence' for urban design projects that demonstrate the valuable contributions to reclaim our urban landscapes.



Figure 6.5: Shopping street, Koopgoot, Rotterdam



Figure 6.6: Levelled access, Koopgoot, Rotterdam







# 6.1.5 Paddington Basin

Improvements to the canal Basin and surrounding infrastructure include the introduction of a range of mixed uses with cafés, bars, restaurants and retail outlets. It opens all public spaces directly onto the waterside, thus creating a unique public realm for everyone's enjoyment and re-stitches together routes across the city via new walks and footbridges. Within this



Figure 6.7: Re-stitched routes, Paddington Basin, London

process, the former "backs" of sites have become "fronts".

# 6.1.6 Broadgate, London

A major development strategy intended to repair the urban fabric, combining the development of new financial services, offices and retail space with important new public squares, gardens and public art.



Figure 6.8: Public squares, Broadgate Tower, London

# 6.1.7 Phoenix Initiative, Coventry

Occupying a 3 hectare site, the scheme delivers a series of incorporated spaces of different scales and characters which are contained by various refurbished and new buildings. The masterplan evolved to create a metaphorical journey from the past to the future and became a series of spaces linking the City's cathedral quarter with the edge of the ring road and modern commercial land to the North. Completed in 2004, the regeneration scheme has created four new public gardens and two civic squares and has already led to new commercial investment on the site including new apartments to provide the city centre with its first residents.



Figure 6.9: Series of spaces, Priory Place, Coventry



Figure 6.10: Street furniture, Priory Place, Coventry







# 6.1.8 Regents Place, Euston Road, London (Station forecourt)

Regents Place has a major Euston Road frontage and excellent transport links, as well as a range of retail and leisure outlets that combine to offer an integrated business environment to its occupiers and readily accessible services for the local community. The square is a setting for a diverse range of newly commissioned works of art by acclaimed contemporary artists. The programme for development of the estate is continuing.



Figure 6.11: Art work, Regents Place, London



Figure 6.12: Space, Regents Place, London

# 6.1.9 Piccadilly Gardens, Manchester

Piccadilly Gardens is a major civic space that lies between the city's main hotel district and retail area. The sunken Victorian gardens which lay at its heart had become cut off from their surroundings by busy roads and tramways, had taken on a neglected atmosphere and had become a focus for anti-social behaviour. The remodelling includes over a hundred semimature trees, a large lawned area, a fountain plaza traversed by a catwalk bridge, and a recreational pavilion designed by Tadao Ando. Piccadilly Gardens is criss-crossed by a series of north-south and east-west paths, which respect the various desire lines of the major routes through this part of

the city. The most dominant feature of the redesign of the Gardens is the large elliptical fountain, which is visible from all areas. Throughout the site, natural 'floating' oak benches provide formal seating.



Figure 6.13: Traversing walkways, Piccadilly Gardens, Manchester

# 6.1.10 Tower Hill, London (Topography)

The change in the approach to the Tower of London is remarkable. Previously dominated by a jumbled collection of buildings and barriers, the site now consists of a grandly sloping open space, from which both the tower and the river are visible.



Figure: 6.14: Sloped space, Towerhill, London

# 6.1.11 Elephant & Castle

The £1.5 billion regeneration programme for the Elephant and Castle area will involve the demolition of the existing Shopping Centre and the Heyfate Estate, and will reroute traffic to give priority to public transport and pedestrians. The illustrative masterplan designates three levels of tall building cluster zones. Along with a new civic square, two new towers will





straddle the railway line, acting as the 'gateway' and central focus to the new town centre. This area is designated as the core cluster zone, where the tallest buildings will be located. A secondary tall building cluster zone comprises of key sites located around the core cluster, will comprise of buildings lower in height and scale. A third cluster zone is designated to accommodate tall buildings as well, facing St. Mary's Churchyard. However, this zone will be 'subservient' in height and scale to



Figure 6.15: Cluster zone, Elephant & Castle, London

the primary and secondary cluster zones. Outside of the tall building zones, a building height profile that 'falls away' from the centre will be established, and will be in response to the existing context and built form profile.

# 6.1.12 Stratford City

Stratford City is a massive, £3 billion development covering 73 hectares around the new CTRL international railway station at Stratford, East London. The proposals comprise a major new urban mixed use centre with 140,000 square metres of retail space, and 465,000 square metres of office space. It also includes 4,500 homes, alongside conference



Figure 6.16: Massing, Stratford, London

facilities, hotels, schools, and a range of health and community facilities. In successfully interweaving four characteristically distinct urban districts with the new station, the master plan overlays a network of public spaces on the rail infrastructure. A major one-kilometre long cut will bisect the site with the international station at its heart, with a number of railway lines running through the



Figure 6.17: Mixed uses, Stratford, London

site. In order to favour pedestrian movement, the site will be built up at different levels and pedestrian routes will flow above the concealed railway lines.

# 6.1.13 Lehrter Bahnhof (Berlin Hauptbahnhof)

Lehrter Bahnhof in Berlin will be Europe's largest rail transportation hub and is currently under construction. Planned as a cross station, the station is where an east-west and a north-south InterCityExpress railway line intersect, combined with suburban and under-ground railway lines. A huge steel and glass dome spans the east-west tracks while two



Figure 6.18: Parallel wings, Lehrter Bahnhof, Berlin

parallel wings frame the lower north-south tracks. The project's central design principle is the prominent emphasis of the existing railway tracks in the urban landscape, with the main concourse supported by two 46 metres





tall bridging towers, offering roughly 44,000 m² of commercial space. The different levels will offer a comprehensive selection of first-class retail, catering outlets and service facilities, including a post office, travel agency and car rental. Some 300,000 travellers and visitors are expected to use the Berlin Hauptbahnhof daily.



Figure 6.19: Levels, Lehrter Bahnhof, Berlin





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Planning Section, Planning & Transport, Director of Environment, Culture & Sport, Reading Borough Council, Reading RG1 7TD

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