  

**Appendix A - Oxford Road extract from the draft Reading Town Centre High Street HAZ Feasibiltiy Study**

**GEORGIAN DEVELOPMENT**

Several properties along the eastern stretch of Oxford Road were built prior to 1840 in the Georgian or Regency period. The terraces, such as Prospect Terrace, are recognisable for their restrained elevations, surviving sash windows and round-arched entrances with fanlights. The detached villas are slightly grander in scale and character, for example, the porticoed wing of Mannson House, which formerly comprised a large central block and two smaller side wings. The Holy Trinity Parish Church was built to serve the new suburb in c.1826 (refronted in 1845).

**VICTORIAN GROWTH AND EXPANSION**

The mid to late Victorian terraces that infilled open land between the scattered Georgian developments range in scale and level of detailing, reflecting the demands of both the new industrial workers but also an emerging professional class. There are some modest terraces with very little ornament, whilst others, particularly the later terraces to the west towards the railway bridge, are characterised by larger proportions, poly-chrome brickwork, rendered window surrounds, bay windows, gable ends with decorative barge boards and ridge tiles. Unlike the Georgian residential development, these terraces comprised retail units at ground floor with residential above, introducing a greater degree of self-sufficiency to Oxford Road.



*View of the west end of Oxford Road showing shopfronts and the earlier railway bridge.The shops include Harry Fewtrell, sweet, tobacconist, newsagent (No. 263); H. J. Blundell, grocer’s shop (No. 184); another tobacconist (No. 180) and a stationer (No. 178), c.1910 (Reading Library: (READ)147849(Sirsi) 1426886)*

A comparison between the late 19th century and early 20th century OS maps reveals the late 19th century development at the west end of the street. Victoria Nursey and Stanley Dairy were replaced by Nos. 152 to 184 and the terraced streets behind (to the north), and Nos. 249 to 265 were built on undeveloped land opposite. Tram lines had also been introduced on the Oxford Road in the late 19th century, enhancing

accessibility across the area and linking it to the town centre.

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*View of the west end of Oxford road (north side) showing the late 19th century buildings at Nos. 172 to*

*184 and Bridge Hall beyond.The grocer’s shop on the far left (No. 184) was that of Harry J. Blundell,*

*followed by a parade of shops to the right, c.1909 (Reading Library: (READ)17627(Sirsi) 1247708)*

As the population increased, additional places of worship were built including non-conformist chapels, namely Providence Chapel at the very east end of the street (c.1826) and Bridge Hall, which was built for Reading’s Open Brethren Group (c.1899). The Oxford Road Primary School was built in the early 1880s for infants,

nursery and juniors. The choice of architects, Morris and Stallwood, who were amongst the most successful in Reading and well-recognised for their school buildings reflects the burgeoning popularity and prosperity of Oxford Road at the

time. This is also reflected by the building's expansion in the 1890s. Early 20th century photographs reflect the range of businesses and services present on Oxford Road including

bakers, butchers, grocers, tobacconists, boot makers, tailors, dry cleaners, a post office and hairdressers. The shopfronts are characterful yet subtle in appearance, lacking superfluous signage or advertising aside from their shop windows, painted signage on brickwork and fascia signage. Most of the shopfronts projected out into the street at ground floor level, adding depth to the building as a whole and a number of units featured retractable canvas awnings or canopies over their windows. Some of the churches built to serve the expanding community are also depicted in these photographs. The street was further equipped in 1929 with the construction of the Pavilion, an important cinema in Reading, now in use as the Lifespring Church.

**LATE 20TH CENTURY TO PRESENT DAY**

The Inner Distribution Road was constructed in the 1970s, which passed to the east of Alfred Street and Howard Street, and severed the study area from the town centre. The 20th century saw much modern infill development, particularly on the north side of Oxford Road, where a number of semi-detached/ detached Victorian villas were replaced by buildings including the petrol station or modern

housing such as Allison Court. The unsympathetic modern retail frontage at Nos. 267-271 screens a historic villa, Oxford Lodge, from view.

The road has long been characterised by shops with residential accommodation, a quality that it retains today despite the nature of shops and services evolving over time. Grocers, bakers, hair salons, estate agents, key cutters and pharmacies all serve the needs of the diverse local community and these businesses perpetuate the road’s historic role of providing diverse retail services for its residents.



*Nos. 182-184 Oxford Road, the grocery shop of H.J. Blundell, No. 180, the tobacconist of Edward Charles Gardiner is visible next door, c. 1910 (Reading Library: (READ)30635(Sirsi) 1375526)*

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