

READING BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN PARTIAL UPDATE TALL BUILDINGS STRATEGY UPDATE NOTE

May 2025

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The 2008 Tall Buildings Strategy was produced by Entec UK Ltd to inform the Reading Central Area Action Plan and related documents. It was always intended to be a very long-term approach to tall buildings in Reading, to be implemented over decades. Rather than producing an entirely new Tall Buildings Strategy, this note considers changes since 2008 and assesses the degree to which the conclusions of the Tall Buildings Strategy (TBS) remain relevant.
- 1.2 The purpose of the TBS at the time was to help to fulfil a gap in Council policy, in response to increasing interest in tall buildings in Reading, in providing an evidence base to support a new policy in the Reading Central Area Action Plan (RCAAP). As a result, policy RC11 on Tall Buildings was included in the RCAAP, which was adopted in January 2009. This policy was carried forward largely unchanged into the Local Plan adopted in November 2019, following the conclusions of a 2018 Tall Buildings Strategy Update Note, of which this is a revised version, and the Inspector's report for the Reading Borough Local Plan concluded that this was justified subject to an identified main modification.
- 1.3 This note generally considers the various stages of the TBS and asks whether there have been changes that would have altered the conclusions of the document over the period 2008 to 2025. It is recognised that this is a long period, but this in itself should not render a document out of date, rather it should centre on its content.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 Since the TBS was produced in 2008, virtually all of the documents referred to within the policy context have been replaced. Planning Policy Guidance Notes 1, 3, 6, 15 and 22, along with all other planning policy guidance notes, has been replaced by several iterations of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Local Plan Partial Update reached Regulation 19 stage in November 2024, which means that, under transitional arrangements, it will fall to be examined under the December 2023 version of the NPPF. References in this section are to the 2023 NPPF unless otherwise stated. However, the December 2024 version of the NPPF is also relevant in some cases, as policies within the updated plan will ultimately need to be operated alongside the most recent NPPF.
- 2.2 Regional Planning Guidance was replaced by the South East Plan, which itself was revoked more than a decade ago.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.3 There are too many specific differences in terms of the wording of policy context to look at individually, so it makes sense to consider at a high level whether the overall direction of policy has changed. In 2008, national planning policy could be summarised as follows:
- a) Policies should promote high quality inclusive design and development should take the opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area (PPS1);
 - b) Planning has a key role to play in tackling and adapting to the effects of climate change. This role incorporates aspects such as securing energy and resource efficiency in development and ensuring a development pattern that promotes sustainable transport modes (PPS2);
 - c) Promotion of the role of town centres in meeting many of the needs of the area, including through higher density, mixed use developments (PPS6);
 - d) Making the most efficient use of sites that are accessible by a choice of means of transport (PPS13);
 - e) The need to preserve and enhance the historic environment, and a recognition of the contribution that heritage makes to the economy (PPG15).

Design

- 2.4 Whilst there has been substantial evolution in the form and wording of design policy since 2008, the core principles of good design remain largely the same.
- 2.5 The headline requirement of the NPPF is to achieve well-designed, beautiful and safe places, as set out in the environmental objective for planning in paragraph 8. The introduction of 'beauty' into national policy was a relatively recent addition, and the 2024 NPPF subsequently removed these references.
- 2.6 The role of design in local plan making is set out in paragraph 132, which states that "*Plans should, at the most appropriate level, set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable*". The main vehicle for this within the NPPF is through design guides or codes. No design codes have yet been produced for Reading.
- 2.7 Paragraph 139 states that "*Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design*". This is

particularly important because the footnote to this statement gives weight to two relatively recent publications on design, the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code, which contain a great deal of detailed guidance which is of relevance.

2.8 Much of the National Design Guide (2021) is relevant to tall buildings, and it is not necessary to summarise it all here, but there are some specific tall building comments that are worth highlighting. Paragraph 70 notes the potential benefits of tall buildings, stating that *“Well-designed tall buildings play a positive urban design role in the built form. They act as landmarks, emphasising important places and making a positive contribution to views and the skyline.”*

2.9 The following paragraph 71 however caveats this as follows:

“Proposals for tall buildings (and other buildings with a significantly larger scale or bulk than their surroundings) require special consideration. This includes their location and siting; relationship to context; impact on local character, views and sight lines; composition - how they meet the ground and the sky; and environmental impacts, such as sunlight, daylight, overshadowing and wind. These need to be resolved satisfactorily in relation to the context and local character”.

2.10 Figure 44 of the National Design Guide (2021) states that tall buildings principles include *“Topography, characterisation studies heritage assets, local historic character and conservation areas, transport accessibility, identified long views and skylines to be protected, sensitive local views, vistas and gateways.”*

2.11 Figure 49 goes into more detail and states the following with regard to tall buildings design principles:

“Tall buildings are, by their nature, one-offs and need to be designed to the highest architectural quality because of their prominence. They can be designed in a variety of architectural styles, but the following principles apply to all tall buildings:

- *Top: The top of the building and its impact on the skyline needs to be carefully considered. Services need to be concealed and both the street views and the long views need to be considered.*
- *Form: The form and silhouette of the building needs to be considered. The long and short elevations need to be well-proportioned in terms of their slenderness.*
- *Materials: The use of materials need to be consistent and simple.*
- *Base: The tall building needs to follow the building line at street level. To do this it may rise from a base or plinth that is scaled to the surrounding buildings.*
- *Public realm: Public spaces around the base of tall buildings need to be generous, well designed and contribute positively to the local context.*
- *Entrance: The entrance to the tall building needs to be clearly marked.*
- *Micro-climate: The tall building needs to be considered in terms of overshadowing and wind. It may be necessary to protect the surrounding public realm from down draughts.*
- *Active Frontage: If required by the design code the ground floor of the tall building needs to include active frontages.”*

2.12 In general therefore, there is more specific national policy and guidance available on design, including that specific to tall buildings, than at the time of the TBS. However, most of this relates to well-understood design principles that is broadly in line with policy and guidance at the time.

The main policy change has been in relation to the need for 'beauty', and the TBS was not framed in those terms, but in reality implementing beauty in practice requires reliance on established design principles as set out in documents such as the National Design Guide.

Sustainability

- 2.13 Sustainability is an area in which national policy has changed substantially since the TBS was prepared. At the highest level, national policy is now framed in terms of the presumption in favour of sustainable development, understood in terms of the economic, social and environmental role of planning, which includes mitigating and adapting to climate change and moving to a low-carbon economy.
- 2.14 Paragraph 158 states that plans *"should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change"* and that they *"should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts"*. Paragraph 159 goes on to state that new development should both help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and avoid increasing vulnerability to impacts of climate change.
- 2.15 It is worth noting that, within the presumption in favour of sustainable development in paragraph 8, the NPPF makes clear that making effective use of land in urban areas is part of the approach to mitigating climate change.

Town centres

- 2.16 Developments which attract the greatest number of visits continue to be focused on town centres, where high density, mixed use development on sites accessible by a choice of modes of transport is appropriate.

Density and efficient use of land

- 2.17 Although national policy has long referred to the need to make efficient use of land, in particular brownfield and accessible sites, recent changes to the NPPF have drawn this into particular focus. Chapter 11 of the NPPF deals with this matter specifically, and states that *"Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land"* (paragraph 123).
- 2.18 Specifically in terms of density, paragraph 129 states that, where there is a shortage of land for meeting housing needs, plans:

"...should include the use of minimum density standards for city and town centres and other locations that are well served by public transport. These standards should seek a significant uplift in the average density of residential development within these areas, unless it can be shown that there are strong reasons why this would be inappropriate."
- 2.19 However, paragraph 130 does note that *"significant uplifts in the average density of residential development may be inappropriate if the resulting built form would be wholly out of character with the existing area"*. This needs to be evidenced through authority-wide design codes.
- 2.20 The standard method for housing need (see separate heading) also emphasises this point by incorporation of the urban uplift for the 20 largest urban areas, which would in many cases necessitate development at a high density.
- 2.21 Therefore, national policy now has a greater emphasis on making efficient use of accessible, town centre sites for development at a high density than it did at the time of the TBS.

Heritage

- 2.22 National policy on heritage has changed somewhat, and, rather than reactive protection, the focus in the NPPF is on setting out a positive strategy for the historic environment, which should inform the whole plan. In Reading, this previously led to a change from a single policy on protection of heritage assets in the Core Strategy, to a more wide-ranging suite of policies in the adopted Local Plan. This more positive approach is compatible with the approach of the TBS, which seeks to understand the relationship of new tall buildings with the historic environment.
- 2.23 Most of these messages remain broadly consistent within the NPPF. The consolidation of policy within the NPPF has enabled the importance of the relationship between good design and historic character to be drawn out more clearly, ensuring that developments *“are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)”* (paragraph 135).

Housing Need

- 2.24 One of the most significant changes to national planning policy in recent years has been in relation to housing need. The effect of this has been that levels of identified housing need have increased substantially.
- 2.25 At the time of the original TBS, housing provision figures were set in regional planning guidance. The relevant figure for Reading in the South East Plan, published soon after the TBS, was 611 dwellings per year. However, this changed substantially, firstly with the expectation that local authorities are responsible for determining their own objectively assessed need (as was the case at the time the adopted Local Plan was prepared) and then with the introduction of the standard method.
- 2.26 In the December 2023 version of the NPPF, against which the Local Plan Partial Update is to be examined, the standard method incorporates an uplift for the authorities at the core of the 20 largest urban areas including Reading, in order to reflect those location’s sustainability and accessibility. Based on figures at 2025, application of the standard method results in a figure of 822 dwellings per year for Reading, which represents a substantial uplift over the approach to housing need at the time of the TBS. This is detailed in more depth in other evidence, notably the Housing Implementation Strategy.
- 2.27 The argument has been made in a number of representations to the Local Plan that, were Reading’s approach to tall buildings to be relaxed, this would deliver significantly greater numbers of homes, and might help to reduce or eliminate this shortfall. This is worth looking at further.
- 2.28 It is clear that a substantial number of additional tall buildings could boost housing supply, although whether this would be viable and deliverable is a different matter. The main issue, however, is the extent of the increase and the effects that such an approach would have, in that it would both potentially conflict with the approach of the NPPF and be a highly inefficient way of delivering housing. The limited advantages of such an approach would therefore be far outweighed by the substantial disadvantages.
- 2.29 The NPPF is clear in paragraph 11 that objectively assessed needs should be met unless:
- i *“the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area; or*

ii any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.”

2.30 In paragraph 8, three overarching objectives (economic, social and environmental) are identified to achieve sustainable development, and, within the social objective, this includes *“to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities ... by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places...”*.

2.31 The NPPF then goes on to state, at paragraph 135, that policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

“are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);.”

2.32 Furthermore, the NPPF also states at paragraph 196 that:

“Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats.”

2.33 It is clear, therefore, that the NPPF continues to recognise the need to balance meeting needs and increasing density with ensuring that design is of high quality, the character and distinctiveness of important areas are maintained and enhanced, and that heritage assets and their settings are conserved and enhanced. These considerations were all part of the HELAA process, and it is balancing these important considerations that has led to the level of development proposed. In short, the HELAA seeks to demonstrate that proposed housing provision is what can be achieved without falling foul of the important considerations in the NPPF, as well as in local policy.

2.34 The issue with seeking to boost development levels through a less restrictive approach to tall buildings is that the gains can be relatively small, whilst the potential impacts are far reaching. Those sites where a less restrictive approach than in the proposed policy have been advocated are generally already proposed for high density development including significant levels of residential, so the number of additional dwellings that can be achieved are often small.

2.35 This can be illustrated with the example of two proposals. The Huntley Wharf development at Kenavon Drive was initially consulted upon at pre-application stage with a proposal including a residential tower of 19 storeys. This proposal would have delivered between 700 and 800 dwellings. However, the proposal was amended, in part in order to comply with the tall buildings policy, and the amended scheme which has recently been completed still delivers 765 dwellings. The removal of a tall building therefore had a negligible effect on the capacity of the site, through a different distribution of density whilst still complying with policy.

2.36 Another example is the refused application at the site now known as Thames Quarter, reference 150120. This site was already recognised in policy as a potential site for a tall building, but the planning application sought three towers of between 24 and 28 storeys, linked together at the lowest storeys. This would have delivered 352 dwellings. The proposal for three towers on the site rather than one was considered to fall foul of the Council’s tall buildings policy RC13 as well as the Reading Station Area Framework and other policies. A new scheme was submitted in 2016 and approved, and is now complete. This delivered 315 dwellings, in a development that contains a single tall building, at 23 storeys shorter than any of the three towers initially proposed. Therefore, a reduction in only 37 dwellings resulted in a significantly improved development with far fewer adverse impacts on a wider area.

- 2.37 The difference between the two schemes on the Thames Quarter site can be illustrated with the below graphic (figure 2.1) from the second application, showing the permitted proposal alongside the silhouette of the original application (in orange). Whilst the specific design issues are clearly peculiar to the site and proposals, it does illustrate a wider point. This is that accommodating a relatively small amount of additional dwellings can result in a development which has much more significant effects on the surrounding townscape and landscape, far outweighing the relatively minor gains in dwellings.

Figure 2.1: Comparison of the two proposals at Thames Quarter site



(Image provided by Lochailort for Thames Quarter planning application 162166)

Regional Planning Guidance

- 2.38 Regional Planning Guidance, in the form of RPG9 and, subsequently, the South East Plan, was relevant at the time of the TBS as it included the identification of Reading as a major regional hub, and therefore a location for continued major development and infrastructure provision.
- 2.39 With the removal of the regional planning tier, there is no explicit regional expectation of growth in central Reading. However, an overall approach of focusing development on the locations where they are most accessible, particularly by sustainable modes of transport, clearly implies that central Reading, as one of the most accessible locations in South East England, is subject to significant levels of development. In addition, the output of the standard method in the December 2023 NPPF as described above, has the same effect of identifying Reading as a particular focus of growth.

Local policy

- 2.40 Local policy has, of course, evolved from that described in the TBS, in particular with the adoption of a policy on tall buildings in the RCAAP and now the Local Plan. However, the degree to which policy from the 1998 Local Plan influenced the TBS is extremely limited, as it was understood that the aim was replacement of this policy. The TBS does refer to a 'City 2020 Vision' document, a

non-planning vision document that aspired to establish Reading as a city and capital of the Thames Valley, and recognised the potential of many areas of the town centre to contribute to these aims, some of which were included within the tall buildings clusters. This document influenced the RCAAP vision and strategy, and has a continued inheritance through the approach in the Local Plan.

- 2.41 The proposals for the Station Cluster, originating in the TBS and identified in the RCAAP, were supplemented with much more detailed guidance in the Reading Station Area Framework, adopted in 2010. This looked at a number of matters critical to the approach to tall buildings in the area, such as height, scale and massing and key views. It identified sites suitable for 'district and local landmarks', and provided clarity to the approach that a cluster of tall buildings is proposed, generally forming a 'dome' pattern with the highest buildings on the sites closest to the station. The Framework was written to accord with the cluster approach, and the Local Plan proposes that the Station Area Framework will continue to apply.

Other guidance

- 2.42 In terms of specific guidance on tall buildings, the relevant document at the time of the TBS was the Guidance on Tall Buildings by English Heritage and CABI, published in 2007. This has now been replaced by Tall Buildings: Historic England Advice Note 4, published in 2022. This is good practice guidance and advice, rather than being part of formal Planning Practice Guidance.
- 2.43 Advice Note 4 reiterates the message of its predecessor, that a plan-led approach to tall buildings which identifies appropriate areas for tall buildings and sets out appropriate heights is appropriate. The guidance continues to advocate detailed urban design modelling, tied to heritage assessment, to understand where tall buildings might be appropriate and what the height parameters should be.
- 2.44 In terms of planning applications, Advice Note 4 moves away from a dedicated list of specific criteria for evaluation set out in the 2007 guidance. However, broadly, the message remains the same, that matters such as local context, historic context, design quality, sustainable design and construction, the credibility of the proposal, and the relationship with public space be considered.

Conclusion

- 2.45 The wording and format of policy has clearly changed substantially in many areas since the TBS was produced, and in some areas more specific national policy is available. However, in terms of the core messages of national policy, the NPPF still seeks high quality design, conservation and enhancement of the historic environment, a focus on town centres and efficient use of the most accessible sites.
- 2.46 The most significant change has been the increased emphasis on increasing densities in highly accessible urban or major town centre locations, both in terms of direct explicit statements and the operation of the standard method for housing need. However, none of this is at the expense of those core considerations around matters such as heritage, high-quality design, local character and flood risk reflected in the TBS.
- 2.47 Therefore, there is not considered to have been sufficient change in the planning policy context to render the TBS out-of-date.

3. Tall buildings definition

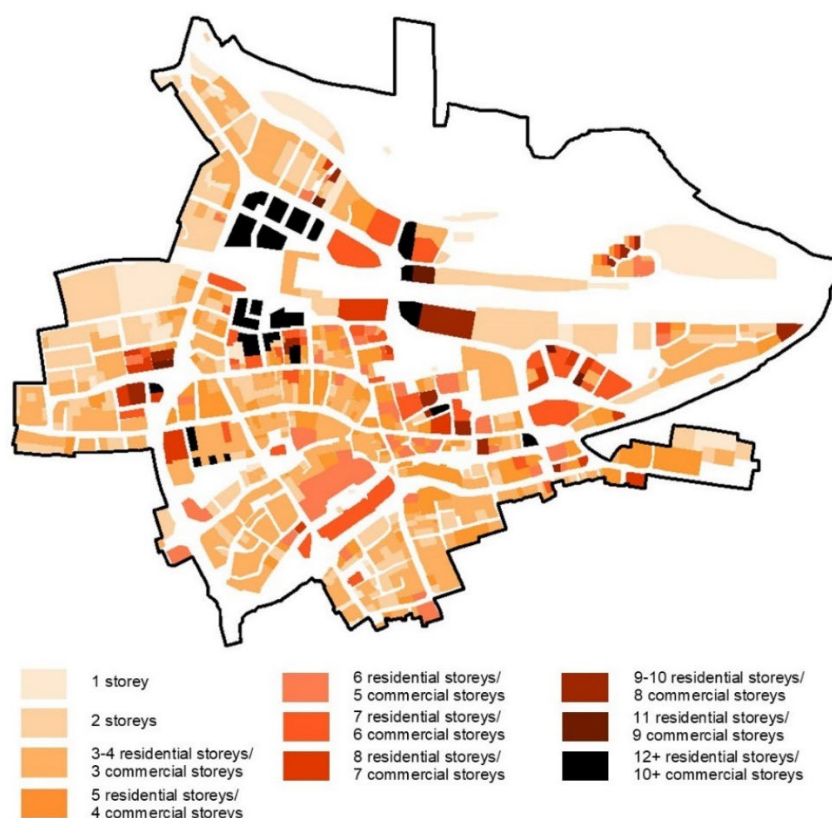
3.1 At the outset, the TBS settled on a definition of ten commercial storeys or equivalent as a 'tall building'. This was based on analysis of the urban form of Reading as being a height which across the whole of the central area, within the context of Reading, could be termed 'tall'. This section looks at whether that remains an appropriate threshold for what constitutes a tall building.

3.2 The TBS sets out the following background to its definition:

"Within the context of central Reading, the predominant building height is between 3 and 5 storeys. There are however numerous examples of groupings of taller buildings e.g. along Kings Road, and of individual buildings which are significantly taller e.g. Thames Tower and Western Tower. Ten storeys was defined as a height which across the whole of the central area, within the context of Reading, could be termed 'tall'."

3.3 An analysis has been carried out of the approximate prevailing height across the centre, and this is summarised in Figure 2. It includes buildings with planning permission or a resolution to grant permission, and for outline permissions it shows the maximum height of building plots.

Figure 3.1: Building height in Central Reading, 2025



3.4 The diagram shows that a large majority of the centre is developed at 5 storeys or below. When these approximate areas are measured, around 81% of the area covered by building plots in the centre (including outstanding permissions) reaches a maximum of 5 commercial storeys, which is half of the height of the tall building definition. Only around 5% reaches 10 commercial storeys or greater, around half of which is in the form of outstanding permissions yet to be developed. In the vast majority of cases therefore a building of 10 commercial storeys will undoubtedly be contextually tall. The only possible exceptions are within the very core of the development sites adjacent to the station, but these areas all now have planning permission.

3.5 The use of 12 residential storeys (as an equivalent to 10 commercial storeys) has meant that some recently permitted residential development has topped out at 11 residential storeys. This is

the case for instance at developments on Kenavon Drive, Weldale Street, Station Hill (plot E) and Vastern Road. However, this is still a relatively small amount of the land coverage across Central Reading, and even on most of those sites 11 residential storeys is the highest building or buildings across a site of mixed height.

- 3.6 In almost all of the town centre, 10 commercial storeys or 12 residential storeys would still be considered tall within its context. Therefore it is not considered that there is any need for a new definition of what constitutes a tall building.

4. Baseline Review

- 4.1 The baseline review contained in chapter 4 of the TBS looked at a number of the significant inputs to the analysis. In particular, it looked at the townscape sensitivity of areas of central Reading and drew conclusions on which areas should be excluded from further consideration for this reason. However, before assessing how the considerations of the baseline review have changes, it is worth examining the changes to tall buildings that have occurred or have been agreed within the last ten years.

Changes to Tall Buildings in Reading

- 4.2 This section describes changes that have happened on the ground, or are expected to happen, with regard to tall buildings in Central Reading, to understand how the context for the Tall Buildings Strategy may have changed.

The Blade

- 4.3 The TBS makes reference to a planning permission (040758) known as Abbey Mill House, permitted in 2004, for a new tall office building. The site is at Abbey Square, which is within the Eastern Grouping as defined in the TBS and Local Plan. Development started shortly after publication of the TBS and was completed in 2010.
- 4.4 Abbey Mill House has now become known as The Blade, and is a well-known local landmark. The building includes 16 storeys of offices, but has a pointed roof spire which is around 25m tall, meaning a total height above ground level of 86m. As such, it was Reading's tallest building, and is visible from many locations around Reading. An 11-storey residential block was also part of the development.

Figure 4.1: The Blade from near Abbey Gate



Chatham Place

- 4.5 The development of Chatham Place was a residential-led scheme on the eastern edge of the centre, within the Western Grouping defined in the TBS/Local Plan. At the time of the TBS, a Planning Brief set out the approach to the development. A first stage was expected to include residential and car parking. A second stage was to include decking over the Inner Distribution Road (IDR), provision of a new swimming pool, and further residential. A final stage proposed a tall building on the site of the current roundabout where Chatham Street meets the IDR.

- 4.6 Phase 1, under construction at the time of the TBS, was completed in 2010, and was largely as originally envisaged. It comprises 307 dwellings, a new multi-storey car park and ground floor retail and related uses, and the highest point of the development reaches 11 residential storeys.
- 4.7 Phase 2 differed substantially from what was originally proposed and permitted at the time of the TBS. The plan of decking over the IDR was abandoned, as was the proposal for a swimming pool. Instead, the development consisted of two residential blocks, comprising a 19-storey tower and a 9-storey building, providing 184 dwellings. It was completed in 2016. As a tall building was part of phase 2, the proposal for a tower on the roundabout site has not been taken forward.

Figure 4.2: Chatham Street Tower facing west



Thames Tower

- 4.8 Thames Tower was an 11 storey office building directly opposite the entrance to Reading station, within the Station Cluster as defined in the TBS/Local Plan. Its large footprint combined with its dark colour meant that it was prominent in many views of Reading, and did not make a particularly positive contribution.
- 4.9 Although the original preference, and the expectation at the time of the TBS, would have been for redevelopment, permission 141043 was granted for an additional four storeys, refurbishment and re-cladding, to form a modernised office facility. Development was completed in 2017. The increased height has therefore made the building more visible from some key views and improved its appearance.

Figure 4.3: Thames Tower before and now



Verto

- 4.10 At the time of the TBS, Kings Point at 120 Kings Road was a 7 storey office building, showing considerable signs of ageing and partly vacant. Permission had already been granted at the time of the TBS for redevelopment for a residential building of between 11 and 13 storeys, so this was expected to be a tall building location. It fell within the Eastern Grouping as defined in the TBS/Local Plan.
- 4.11 The permission at the time of the TBS was not implemented, and there was no change on the site until 2015, when a new permission (150019) was granted for a 17-storey residential building, which would reach 94.1 AOD. This development was completed in 2019 and is now known as Verto.

Figure 4.4: Verto (formerly Kings Point)



Three Forbury Place

- 4.12 Forbury Place is a modern office development along the north side of Forbury Road, opposite Forbury Gardens. The westernmost of the three office buildings, and the first to be constructed, Three Forbury Place is an 11-storey building. Permission was granted in December 2007 (reference 070930), slightly after the bulk of the TBS was written but before the tall buildings policy in the RCAAP was adopted, and development was completed in 2010. The remaining two buildings at Forbury Place, which were constructed more recently and completed in 2017, are 8 storeys and therefore fall below the tall buildings definition cut-off.

Figure 4.5: Three Forbury Place from Forbury Gardens

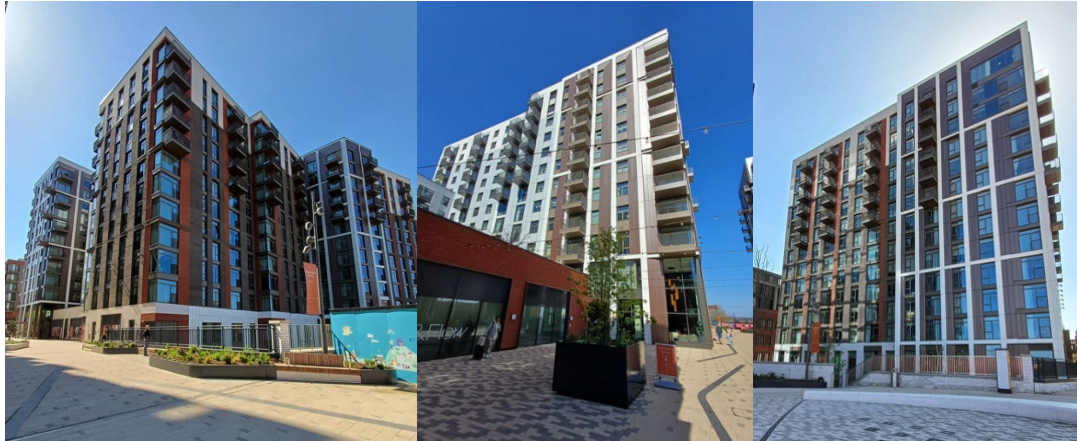


Station Hill and Western Tower

- 4.13 The Station Hill site is an extensive area immediately to the south west of Reading station, which at the time of the TBS comprised offices, retail and leisure uses, a former bus station and car parking. The site included Western Tower, containing 17 storeys of offices and at the time Reading's tallest building. Much of the site at the time of the TBS was vacant. Almost all of the site has now been demolished, including Western Tower.
- 4.14 A Station Hill South Planning and Urban Design Brief, adopted in 2007, had supported the principle of tall buildings on the site, and at the time of the TBS there was a live planning application for a development comprising a number of tall buildings. The site falls at the heart of the Station Cluster, as identified in the TBS/Local Plan, which identified these locations adjacent to the station as being suitable for the tallest buildings in Reading.
- 4.15 Whilst the principle of the site accommodating the tallest buildings in Reading has remained consistent, proposals for Station Hill have evolved through various iterations and permissions, including extending the site to the adjacent vacant Friars Walk shopping centre and another adjacent building.
- 4.16 The most recent proposals, which form the basis for the developments that have been completed or are underway are divided into three phases.
- 4.17 Phase 1, which is already complete, is for Plots E and F, forming the area between Garrard Street and Friar Street, formerly occupied by Friars Walk and Telecom House. Outline permission 190442, amended by 201532 and subject to reserved matters consent 201537, is for Plot E, a development of 415 build-to-rent dwellings together with ground floor commercial units, and rises

to 12/14 storeys¹, 85.1m AOD at the Garrard Street end of the site, reducing in height towards Friar Street. Plot F is subject to outline permission 190441, amended by 201536, and reserved matters consent 201533, and consists of a development of 184 dwellings and ground floor commercial uses. The building is 13/15 storeys in height, or 87.9m AOD. Both plots were completed in 2024.

Figure 4.6: Ebb and Flow (Plots E and F), Station Hill



- 4.18 Phase 2 (Plot G) consists of an office building, recently completed, to the immediate west of Thames Tower and directly opposite the station. Planning permission 192032, granted in July 2021, was a hybrid permission with Phase 2 in detail. The building rises to 123m AOD and consists of 16 commercial storeys.

Figure 4.7: One Station Hill (Plot G)



- 4.19 The remainder of the Station Hill site, consisting of the areas at the north west of the site, is permitted in outline only, with no reserved matters application yet submitted. Planning permission 192032 contains the parameters for the remaining four plots (A, B, C and D), which could potentially include a wide range of uses including residential, hotel, residential care, office and commercial. The maximum permitted heights of these plots are as follows:

¹ Depending on whether ground level is taken from the podium/Friar Street or from Garrard Street

- Plot A – 126.5m AOD
- Plot B – 97.4m AOD
- Plot C – 163m AOD
- Plot D – 116.5m AOD

Figure 4.8: Maximum heights for Phase 3 of Station Hill, from Design and Access Statement



- 4.20 The entire Station Hill site when complete may therefore include as many as seven tall buildings. Plot C would be the tallest building in Reading if built to the maximum permitted height.

Thames Quarter

- 4.21 The site known as Thames Quarter is at the junction of Napier Road and Forbury Road. This was previously known as the Cooper BMW site, a low-rise vehicle dealership. It falls within the Station Cluster as identified in the TBS/Local Plan, but there were no known proposals for a tall building at the time.
- 4.22 Planning permission (162166) was granted in 2017 for a long residential block rising to 10-12 storeys, with the western end closest to the IDR and station housing a single 23-storey residential tower. The development comprises 315 dwellings. An application had previously been refused for a taller residential scheme for three towers linked at lower floor level. The development was completed in 2021-22.

Figure 4.9: Thames Quarter



80 Caversham Road

- 4.23 The former Royal Mail sorting office at 80 Caversham Road lies immediately north of the station. It falls within the Station/River Major Opportunity Area identified originally by the RCAAP and now within the Local Plan. It also falls within the Station Cluster as identified in the TBS/Local Plan.
- 4.24 Outline permission was originally granted in 2012 for a mixed use development with the illustrative scheme showing a building of 16 storeys. However, this permission was not implemented and has now expired.
- 4.25 An outline planning application (182252) was submitted in December 2018 for redevelopment for new buildings of between 2 and 24 storeys for 620 residential units, office, flexible ground floor uses, community centre, health centre and works including parking, servicing, open space. Planning permission was granted in March 2023.
- 4.26 The outline permission comprises two main development blocks, each of which could deliver one or more tall buildings. The maximum permitted height within the westernmost of the two blocks is 74.18m AOD and the maximum height within the easternmost block is 114.18m AOD.

Figure 4.10: Illustrative scheme north elevation for 80 Caversham Road



4.27 No reserved matters application has yet been received.

Vastern Court Retail Park, Vastern Road

4.28 This site comprises a retail park just to the north of Reading station. It falls within the Station/River Major Opportunity Area identified originally by the RCAAP and now within the Local Plan. It also falls within the Station Cluster as identified in the TBS/Local Plan.

4.29 An outline planning application (200328) was submitted in February 2020 for redevelopment of the site that would be expected to include tall buildings and would deliver up to 1,000 dwellings, offices, retail, public house, take away, community and leisure. The parameters were very broad, but all four plots could potentially deliver tall buildings, with the maximum heights on the parameter plans within each plot as follows:

- Plot A – 94.4m AOD
- Plot B – 92.8m AOD
- Plot C – 94.4m AOD
- Plot D – 112.9m AOD

Although the above represents the maximum height that could be reached within each plot and would not apply to the whole plot, the lowest maximum height across the whole site, 55.1m AOD within Plot B, would still likely qualify as a tall building.

4.30 An appeal against non-determination was made in December 2021. The inspector recommended dismissal of the appeal, but it was recovered by the Secretary of State who granted permission in March 2024. No reserved matters application has yet been received.

Figure 4.11: Image of the illustrative scheme for Vastern Court, from Design and Access Statement



Broad Street Mall

4.31 This site is a shopping centre located at the western end of Broad Street, falling within the West Side Major Opportunity Area in the Local Plan and within the Western Grouping as identified in the TBS and Local Plan. There is an existing tall office building, known as Fountain House, providing eight storeys of offices on top of the shopping centre.

4.32 Planning permission (182137) was originally granted in December 2021 for development to provide four residential buildings above and adjacent to the mall to provide 422 dwellings. Three of these would constitute tall buildings. The heights of these would be as follows:

- Plot A – 22 storeys, 120m AOD
- Plot B – 20 storeys, 114m AOD
- Plot C – 17 storeys, 105m AOD

Figure 4.12: CGI visuals of Broad Street Mall permission (182137) from Design and Access Statement



4.33 That permission was not implemented, the site changed ownership and a new planning application PL/24/0173 (presented to committee April 2025) is for a residential-led, mixed use development. As for the previous permission three of the four proposed blocks would constitute tall buildings with the heights as follows:

- Plot A – 30 storeys, 142.55m AOD
- Plot B – 26 storeys, 130.35m AOD
- Plot C – 19 storeys, 106.25m AOD

Figure 4.13: CGI visuals of Broad Street Mall proposal from Design and Access Statement



Conclusion

4.34 There have been a number of changes to tall buildings in the centre of Reading since publication of the TBS. Of the five tall buildings in the centre at 2007/2008, one has been demolished and one extended, whilst seven new buildings have been constructed or are under construction. Permission now exists for at least eleven more, with the exact number being difficult to determine due to the outline nature of some of the key permissions. However, some of this was known at

the time of the TBS – The Blade had planning permission, and permissions also existed at Station Hill and Kings Point, albeit that those schemes have evolved. The principle of a tall building at Chatham Place had been established through the Planning Brief. All tall buildings that have received planning permission are considered to generally accord with the strategy that emerged from the TBS and was enshrined in policy RC13 of the RCAAP and CR11 of the Local Plan, and none have been permitted outside the identified clusters. In fact, the policy, supported by the TBS, has proven effective in resisting tall buildings in inappropriate locations, and inappropriate developments within identified areas. Therefore, it is not considered that developments that have taken place on the ground render the TBS out-of-date.

Townscape

- 4.35 The TBS identified 26 character areas within the town centre, and assessed their townscape sensitivity to, and therefore capacity to accommodate, tall buildings. It came to the conclusion that eight character areas had low sensitivity to tall buildings, and should therefore be subject to further consideration. This was a key element of the TBS analysis.
- 4.36 The assessments of each character area have been re-examined in the context of any changes to the townscape of the area, including changes to tall buildings highlighted in paragraphs 4.2-4.33
- 4.37 The resulting consideration is set out in Appendix 1. Whilst there have been, in some cases, quite substantial changes to townscape, this has not fundamentally altered the conclusions on which sites have low or medium sensitivity, and the following eight character areas continue to have townscape capacity:
- 1: Station Hill
 - 2: Station Area East
 - 15: Chatham Place
 - 16: Civic Centre
 - 18: The Oracle
 - 19: Mallard Row to Fobney Street
 - 21: Forbury South
 - 22: Vastern Road

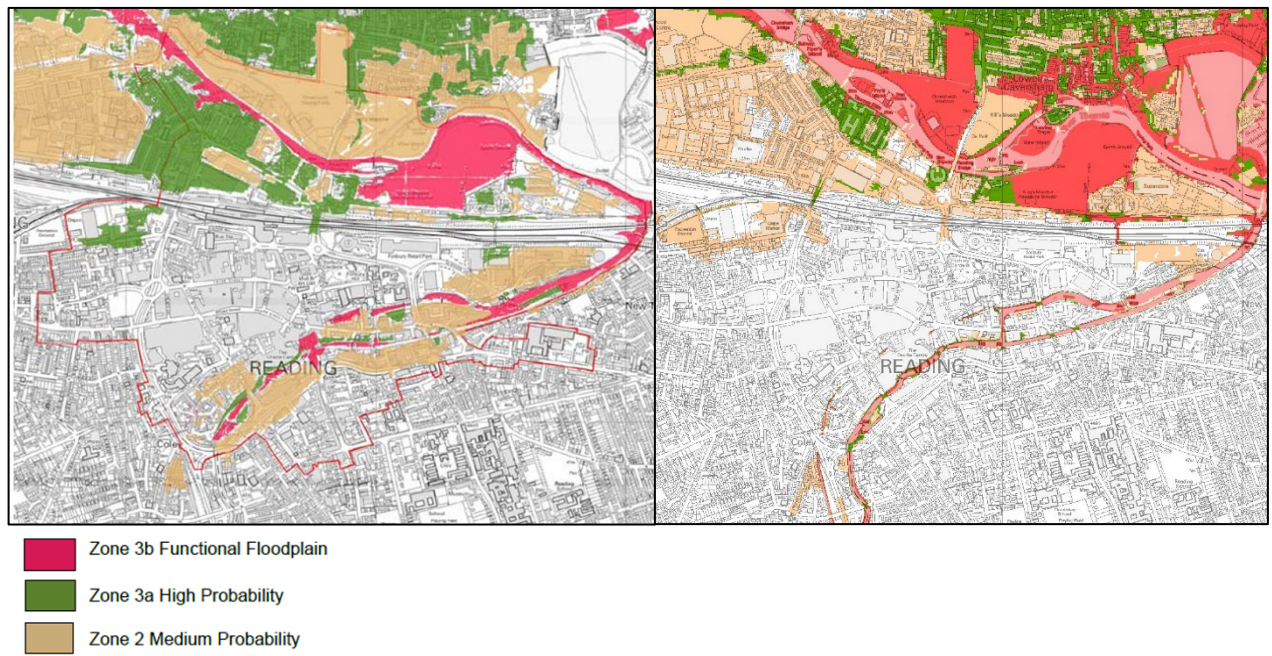
Topography

- 4.38 There have been no changes to topography since the publication of the TBS.

Flooding

- 4.39 At the time of drafting of the TBS, a draft Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) was in preparation, and this was published during 2007. A new SFRA to inform the Local Plan was published in November 2024, and this can be viewed on the Council's website. The SFRA defined the most up to date extent of the functional floodplain. In March 2025, new national flood zones were also published, which are used here for comparative purposes.

Figure 4.14: Comparison of Flood Risk from 2008 (left) to 2025 (right)



- 4.40 As can be seen from the above map, the functional floodplain has been defined as being much broader than within the 2007 SFRA (although it is worth noting that the image is from a draft version, and the final 2007 SFRA did ultimately define a broader extent). However, this will not substantially affect the conclusions, because the greater extent is generally in either riverside open spaces not expected to be subject to development, or in areas of Lower Caversham, not part of the area assessed in the TBS.
- 4.41 The extent of Flood Zone 3 has reduced substantially, in particular in the area north of the station and around Caversham Road, which affects character areas 12 and 22 in particular, as well as the part of the Thames Flood Zone 3 no longer extending south of the railway, which is relevant to character area 13.
- 4.42 Meanwhile, the extent of Flood Zone 2 has also somewhat reduced, although to a lesser extent and with less consistency. The main reduction is around the Kennet, where Flood Zone 2 now rarely extends significantly beyond the immediate vicinity of the river itself. This means reduced flood risk in character areas 10, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24 and 26. However, there are increases in the extent of Flood Zone 2 towards the eastern end of Napier Road (area 11) and to some extent around the Cattle Market area (areas 7 and 13).
- 4.43 The 2025 SFRA also looked at how flood zones would change taking account of various climate change scenarios. These are not shown on the map above, but where they are particularly relevant to the consideration of particular character areas, these are set out in Appendix 4.

Historical Assets and Conservation

- 4.44 There have been few significant changes to designated historical assets and conservation in the area covered by the TBS. No heritage assets have been lost since the TBS was produced, and there have been no buildings added to the national list.
- 4.45 As a result of a revised conservation area appraisal published in 2021, the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road conservation area has been extended, in particular to include buildings on both sides of Oxford Road. Whereas previously the conservation area included land in character area 14, Oxford Road and surroundings, the new conservation boundary also extends into character area 13, the Cattle Market and 15, Chatham Place. The conservation area also now

includes an area within the Western Grouping as defined in policy CR10, specifically a terrace of shops between 78 and 104 Oxford Road.

- 4.46 Another main change that relates to heritage in the town centre relates to the Reading Abbey and its surroundings. The Reading Abbey Revealed project is a project to reopen the Abbey ruins and develop the Abbey quarter area, which covers the whole former Abbey precinct including Market Place and surrounding areas, into a heritage destination. This includes conservation work, interpretation, signage, volunteering and public activities. This project is now complete, and the ruins have been secured and reopened. The adjacent Reading Prison site, which closed in 2014, has significant heritage significance as part of the former Abbey precinct and a listed building in its own right, and offers an opportunity to enhance the heritage offer of this destination. As the project aimed to pull individual elements together into a coherent destination, clearly tall buildings in close proximity must be carefully considered to avoid intruding on this.
- 4.47 Since the TBC was produced, the Council has set up a list of locally important buildings and structures, with the first buildings being added in 2013. A number of buildings in the town centre have been added as follows:
- LL7 – Rising Sun Public House
 - LL8 – Entrance building to 55 Vastern Road²
 - LL14 – King Edward Buildings
 - LL15 – Former Drew’s site
 - LL16 – Attwells Drinking Fountain, Thames Side Promenade
 - LL17 – Kings Road Garden, Kings Road
 - LL18 – 85-88 Broad Street
 - LL19 – Huntley and Palmers Social Club, Kings Road
 - LL22 – Gas Works Social Club, Gas Works Road
 - LL23 – The Bugle
 - LL25 – Reading Bridge
- 4.48 None of the above buildings fall within the identified clusters, but LL7, LL8, LL14, LL15, LL17 and LL25 fall just outside a cluster, and tall buildings in the town centre will likely be visible from most if not all of these buildings. However, identification as a locally-listed building does not necessarily result in a significant change to how an application would be assessed, as a building that is not locally listed is still capable of being considered as a non-designated heritage asset. As such, the new local listings are unlikely to significantly impact the conclusions of the TBS.
- 4.49 Finally, a £1.6 million High Street Heritage Action Zone project, part funded by Historic England, took place within the town centre of Reading from 2020 to 2024 with the aim of investing in community engagement and cultural events alongside improvements to buildings, shop fronts and the public realm. This included streets within the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road, St Mary’s Butts/Castle Street and London Street/Market Place conservation area. Physical improvements resulting from the project included improvements to shopfronts, upgrade to public realm and restoration of monuments. In general, the implications for the conclusions of the TBS were limited.

² To be demolished as part of the permission for 55 Vastern Road

Visual Context

- 4.50 The TBS assessed 44 views – 16 views within central Reading, and 28 long range views where buildings in central Reading were, or could become, visible. Of these views, 23 were considered to have a high sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings, which would require careful consideration in any proposals.
- 4.51 Each of these views (with the exception of a view from Caversham Park in private ownership) has been re-assessed in March 2025, to see whether elements of the view have changed, and whether the overall sensitivity to tall buildings has changed as a result. Appendix 2 itemises the changes, if any, that have taken place. In many cases, new tall buildings have come into view. The Blade, Thames Tower, Thames Quarter, Chatham Street Tower and One Station Hill in particular are now prominent in many of these views. However, in general this has rarely had the effect of changing the sensitivity of the view to the introduction of tall buildings, often because the view already had tall buildings visible, or because the view was identified as being one where tall buildings could enhance the view. There were three cases where the assessment resulted in change in the sensitivity. These are as follows:
- Viewpoint 1: From Green Road, south west of central Reading overlooking playing fields – change from medium to low sensitivity;
 - Viewpoint 3: From the grounds of the University of Reading, Whiteknights Campus – change from high to medium sensitivity; and
 - Viewpoint 22: From footbridge over the M4 - change from high to medium sensitivity.
- 4.52 These changes are relatively minor in the overall context of the many views identified, and the overall assessment therefore remains of relevance. Ultimately, the changes that have happened in many of these views were already anticipated in some form or another at the time of the TBS, as many of the sites were already proposed for tall buildings.

Social Infrastructure

- 4.53 The conclusions of the TBS, that substantial investment in social infrastructure will be required to support a growing town centre population, remains as relevant as ever. The main change in social infrastructure provision in the town centre has been the construction of a new primary school on Hodsoll Road, the Civitas Academy, which opened in 2017, and the construction of a new secondary school on Richfield Avenue, the River Academy (just outside the defined town centre), which opened in September 2024.
- 4.54 The need for social infrastructure is identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan accompanying the Local Plan. Of particular importance in the town centre is primary healthcare, with the proposed rapidly increasing population likely to require the provision of additional facilities. Whilst general primary and secondary education are adequately catered for, there are needs for additional SEND and early years provision, applicable to development across the whole Borough, not solely the town centre.
- 4.55 The future of the Royal Berkshire Hospital remains of great significance to development in Reading. The development of a new hospital remains part of the New Hospitals Programme, albeit that it is now most likely to take place towards the end of the plan period, and this could well involve the hospital moving to a site more distant from the town centre. This raises questions of Reading residents' access to healthcare, and the Council will look to ensure that some services are able to be retained in a central location.

Sustainable Travel

- 4.56 The TBS looked at accessibility by sustainable modes of travel as a way to distinguish which areas may have more potential for tall buildings. In general, most of Central Reading was highly accessible by a choice of means of travel, and this remains the case, but the following major sustainable transport measures have been implemented since the TBS was prepared:
- Reading Station improvements: A major improvement to Reading Station has been undertaken to remove a bottleneck on routes west out of London, and to increase capacity, and this has been accompanied by the provision of transport interchange facilities. This has made Central Reading as a whole even more accessible by rail, but has also made a number of changes to sustainable travel within the centre itself:
 - A new northern station entrance has been provided, which enables much better access by foot and cycle from areas north of the railway line to the station.
 - Three public transport interchanges have been provided, two to the south and one to the north of the station. The northern interchange is the major change, and this serves in particular buses to and from Caversham.
 - An underpass under the station has been opened up, which improves links by foot between the northern and southern sides of the railway.
 - Christchurch Bridge: A new pedestrian and cycle bridge across the Thames was opened in 2015, and this improves links from Caversham and the riverside open spaces to the centre from the north. The development at 55 Vastern Road enables a north south link pedestrian and cycle link through to the station and under the railway into the core of the centre.
 - Napier Road underpass: An underpass under Napier Road has been opened to the public, linking Kings Meadow to the Kenavon Drive area.
 - Park and ride: A new park and ride has been opened at MereOak, to the south of Reading. The bus service from the park and ride stops at St Mary's Butts, Reading Station and Market Place.
 - Bus rapid transit: Various bus priority measures along the A33 south of Reading have been put in place to enable what is now termed as bus rapid transit to the south. This links to key locations such as MereOak park and ride.
 - National cycle network route 422: NCN 422 will connect Newbury and Ascot, via Reading town centre, Wokingham and Bracknell. The enhancements through Reading have now largely been put in place including on and off-carriageway cycle facilities and new crossing points.
- 4.57 There has therefore been substantial investment in sustainable transport in the centre. Most of the schemes above were already planned at the time of the TBS. In terms of differentiating between the accessibility of different areas of the centre, the key changes have been to north-south links, in particular across the Thames and railway, and areas to the north of the station now have much improved foot and cycle links to the rest of the centre.

Open Space

- 4.58 The consideration of impacts on open spaces was largely contained in the townscape analysis. Generally, open spaces in the town centre have changed little since the 2008 TBS. However, the main changes have been the delivery of squares at the northern and southern entrances to the station. Again, these were already planned at the time of the TBS. There have also been smaller areas of public space delivered such as within the Kenavon Drive development.

Market Analysis

- 4.59 No new tall buildings market analysis has been carried out. There continues to be interest in the provision of additional tall buildings, as shown by representations to the Local Plan on certain sites, and it is likely that the market can sustain a larger number of tall buildings, particularly for residential use, than was envisaged in the original Knight Frank analysis that fed into the TBS. On this basis, areas should not be considered unsuitable for tall buildings based solely on market factors, but as the TBS did not base such decisions purely on the market this would be unchanged.

5. Analysis of character areas

- 5.1 After undertaking a baseline analysis, the TBS looked in more detail at the eight character areas that were considered to have low townscape sensitivity to tall buildings, and considered the other elements that arose during the baseline review to understand the suitability as a location for tall buildings.
- 5.2 As the previous section has identified, the eight character areas with lowest townscape sensitivity to tall buildings remain as in the original TBS. They are as follows:
- 1: Station Hill
 - 2: Station Area East
 - 15: Chatham Place
 - 16: Civic Centre
 - 18: The Oracle
 - 19: Mallard Row to Fobney Street
 - 21: Forbury South
 - 22: Vastern Road
- 5.3 The schedules in Appendix 3 present the conclusions of the further analysis in the TBS and consider any changes that have taken place since publication of the TBS to once again understand whether the conclusions would change. As set out in those schedules, there have been no changes that would alter which of these areas are considered to be potentially suitable for tall buildings, and the conclusions of the TBS thus remain relevant.

6. Design guidelines

- 6.1 After establishing the locations with potential for tall buildings, the TBS goes on to generate design guidelines to feed into a tall buildings policy. It deals firstly with general guidelines, applicable to all tall buildings, and then considers more area-specific guidelines.
- 6.2 In terms of general guidelines, there are not considered to have been substantial changes that would alter these. The guidelines identified are straightforward elements of good design which continue to be applicable. Some have been developed from the good practice guidance, and whilst this may have been superseded, the key aspects of what constitutes good design remain in place.
- 6.3 The site-specific principles for those areas which were identified as having potential for tall buildings were developed out of all of the previous analysis of matters such as townscape character, key views, heritage and sustainable travel. These matters have been discussed in the previous sections, and, as they are still broadly relevant, there is not considered to be any reason to substantially amend the site-specific principles.

7. Other changes

Duty to co-operate

- 7.1 One change that has significantly affected the production of planning policy since the publication of the TBS has been the introduction of the duty to co-operate, which requires ongoing liaison with key partners. Reading is bounded by Wokingham Borough Council, West Berkshire District Council, and South Oxfordshire District Council, and there are points in all three authorities where tall buildings in the centre of Reading are visible. Views 8, 9 and 11 are within South Oxfordshire, views 12, 15, 16, 17 and 18 are in Wokingham and view 22 is in West Berkshire. For that reason, tall buildings have been identified as a strategic matter in the Duty to Co-operate Statement.
- 7.2 The engagement that has taken place under the duty to co-operate is summarised in the Duty to Co-operate Statement (2025). In general, adjoining authorities have not expressed concern with the proposed approach. There is an acceptance that there is some visibility of Central Reading from locations on the edge of the urban area.
- 7.3 Broadly, there are not major concerns with the policy approach specified, but partners may well be concerned were there to be an unrestricted approach to tall buildings. The Civil Aviation Authority has not expressed any concerns about the Council's approach. Therefore, the introduction of the duty to co-operate is not considered to have affected the circumstances of the TBS.

Heathrow Safeguarding Zone

- 7.4 Recent changes to CAP 785 Part B Implementation and Safeguarding of (IFPs³) in the UK have resulted in extensions to the safeguarding zone around Heathrow Airport from 15 km to 55 km, which now includes the whole of Reading Borough. This extended safeguarding zone is to be in effect by April 2025.
- 7.5 The effect of the safeguarding zone will be the need to consult Heathrow Airport on any buildings and structures either temporary or permanent including cranes that exceed the thresholds detailed in the safeguarding map. For almost all of Reading, that threshold is 150 metres (492.1 feet) in height. There are small areas of Tilehurst and Emmer Green on higher ground where a lower threshold is used (90 metres or 295.3 feet), but these are not within the Tall Buildings Strategy area nor are they likely to see any development approaching this height.
- 7.6 No buildings have been permitted or constructed that exceed the 150 metres threshold other than Plot C at Station Hill, which already had permission before the change was made.

Chilterns National Landscape

- 7.7 The Chilterns National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) currently adjoins the Reading Borough boundary to the north west. Work is now underway on a potential extension to the Chilterns National Landscape. This follows the publication of the government commission Landscapes Review, in September 2019 (the 'Glover Review'), which recommended an extension. A Written Ministerial Statement by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, George Eustice, committed in a Written Ministerial Statement on 24th June 2021 to designate additional protected landscapes including an extension to the Chilterns National Landscape. This work is now underway, and it is currently expected that a consultation will be carried out in spring or summer 2025.

³ Instrument Flight Procedures

- 7.8 At this stage, it is not known whether any land within Reading or on the boundary would be affected, but there is the potential for land to be included within the National Landscape where tall buildings in central Reading are currently visible or where additional tall buildings would be visible. Since the key views have already been considered specifically within the Tall Buildings Strategy, it is not considered likely that an extension will have significant implications for the approach to tall buildings, but this remains to be seen in full.

8. Conclusion on strategy

8.1 This note has identified the following:

- Although planning policy documents have changed, the overall approach of local and national policy remains broadly equivalent;
- One major contextual change is the approach to housing needs and maximising density in major town centres, but as discussed here, tall buildings are far from the only way of delivering high density development;
- A number of new tall buildings have been constructed or are planned, and as a result Reading has physically changed substantially in places. However, all of these are in areas that the TBS considered appropriate locations for tall buildings, and many were planned in some form or another at the time of the TBS;
- Analysis of the various sub-areas of the centre for their townscape character has concluded that the same areas still have potential for tall buildings;
- There have been some changes to matters such as flood risk and sustainable travel across the centre, which particularly serve to emphasise the suitability of areas around the station;
- The sensitivity of key views remains largely as originally assessed, other than in three cases; and
- The operation of the duty to co-operate has not raised any new issues.

8.2 For this reason, it is considered that the overall evidence and approach that was set out by the TBS and resulting tall buildings policy is still generally valid, subject to the amendments to better bring the policy into line with the original evidence (see section 9). As a result, the TBS, accompanied by this note, remains a valid piece of evidence for policy making in 2025, and it should continue to underpin the policy approach of the Local Plan.

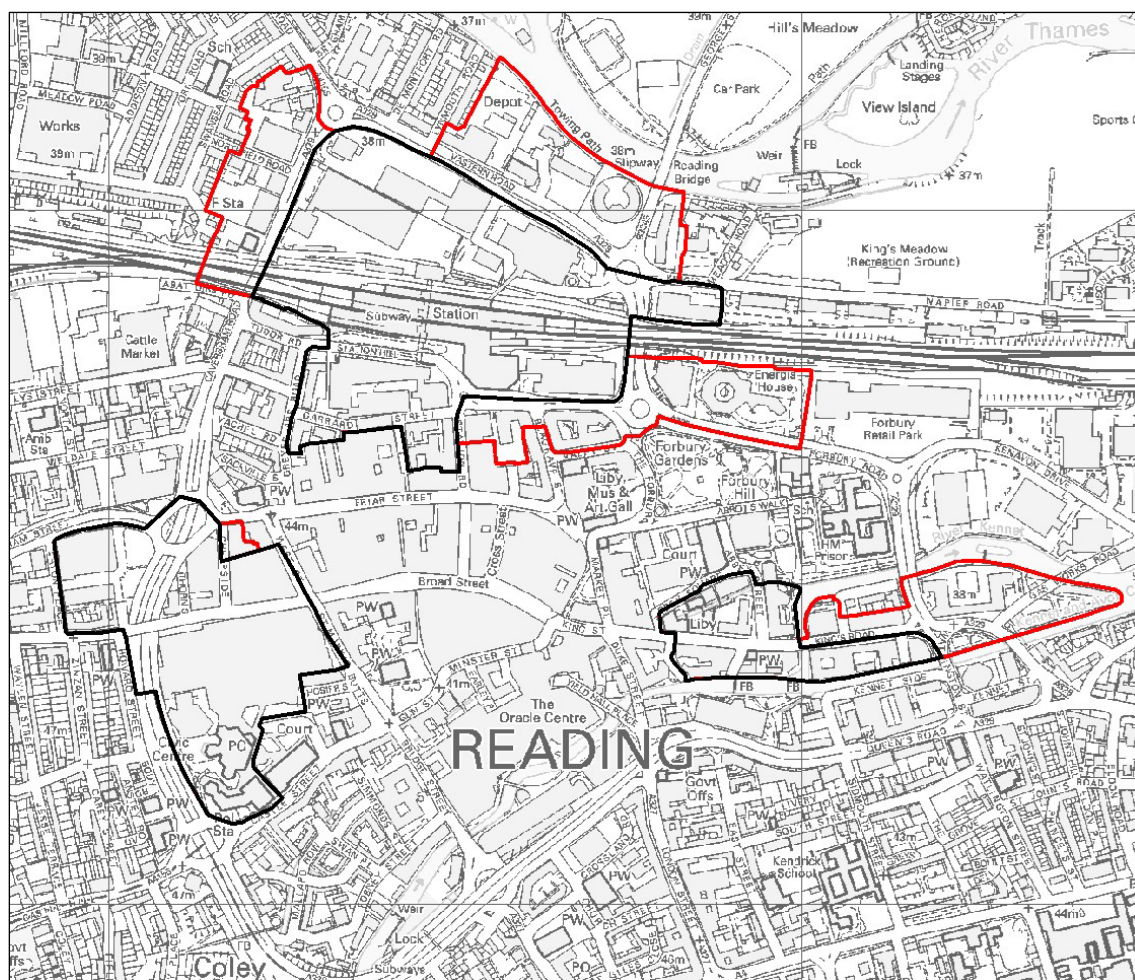
9. Determining the policy approach based on the strategy

- 9.1 The previous section has identified that the approach of the TBS is still valid after an assessment of relevant changes since it was published. However, there is an issue with the degree to which the existing adopted policy CR10 actually reflects the evidence in the TBS that is worth highlighting and addressing in this section.
- 9.2 There are two issues in particular that need to be addressed:
1. The tall buildings clusters in the adopted Local Plan (2019) do not exactly reflect the preferred tall building locations in figure 5.1 of the TBS; and
 2. In the context of the high level of need for development, the areas identified as having 'moderate' suitability for tall buildings should no longer be subject to an entirely restrictive approach.

Boundaries of the existing clusters

- 9.3 In terms of point 1, figure 9.1 shows the boundary of the areas identified by figure 5.1 of the TBS as preferred tall buildings locations in red, and the boundary of the clusters that were actually adopted, originally as part of the Reading Central Area Action Plan (RCAAP) in 2009, in black.

Figure 9.1: Adopted tall buildings clusters compared to preferred areas shown in the Tall Buildings Strategy



- 9.4 It is clear that there is in some cases a significant difference between the two, but a rationale for this difference has not been recorded as part of the RCAAP adoption process. It is relatively clear what that likely rationale would have been, as the areas excluded tend to be those with a high degree of sensitivity. This includes:

- Areas north of Vastern Road (Station/River cluster), where there are sensitivities around the landscape character of the Thames;
- Areas west of Caversham Road (Station/River cluster), where the sensitivities would mainly relate to the smaller scale residential to the west;
- Areas around Forbury Road (Station/River cluster) which are in close proximity to the Market Place/London Street conservation area and the registered park at Forbury Gardens; and
- Areas eastward along the Kennet & Avon canal (Eastern grouping) where the main sensitivities are the character of the waterway itself as well as smaller scale residential to the east.

9.5 These locations that were excluded from the clusters will almost certainly be less suitable for tall buildings than the locations that are more central to the clusters, such as those closest to the station. However, it remains the case that the evidence which this update note has shown to be up-to-date proposes that they be included within the preferred areas.

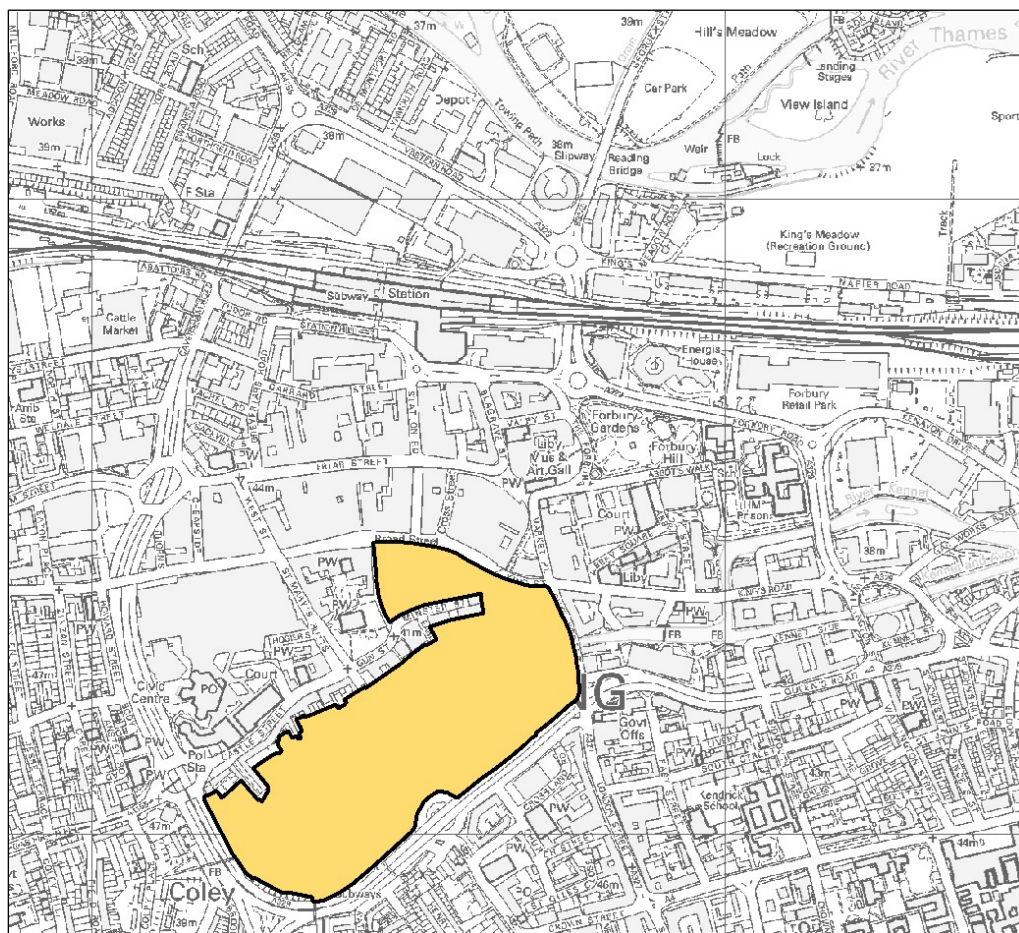
Other locations

9.6 The clusters identified in the TBS were formed from those areas which were considered to have a 'high' suitability for tall buildings within section 5.1 of the TBS. However, in addition to those areas, there were two character areas assessed in the TBS which were considered to have a 'moderate' suitability for tall buildings:

- Character area 18: The Oracle; and
- Character area 19: Mallard Row to Fobney Street.

9.7 The boundaries of these areas are shown on Figure 9.2.

Figure 9.2: Areas with ‘moderate’ suitability for tall buildings in the TBS



- 9.8 The reasons that these areas were considered to have a lesser suitability than those identified as ‘high’ suitability included the sustainable transport provision, flood risk and market perception, but the need for a careful consideration of adjacent conservation areas was also noted.
- 9.9 The evidence does not therefore support a wholly exclusionary approach to tall buildings in these areas, particularly in the context of an increased level of need for a number of uses including residential and with national policy clearly pointing towards maximising the efficiency of use of land in the most accessible locations by public transport, which would include Reading town centre.

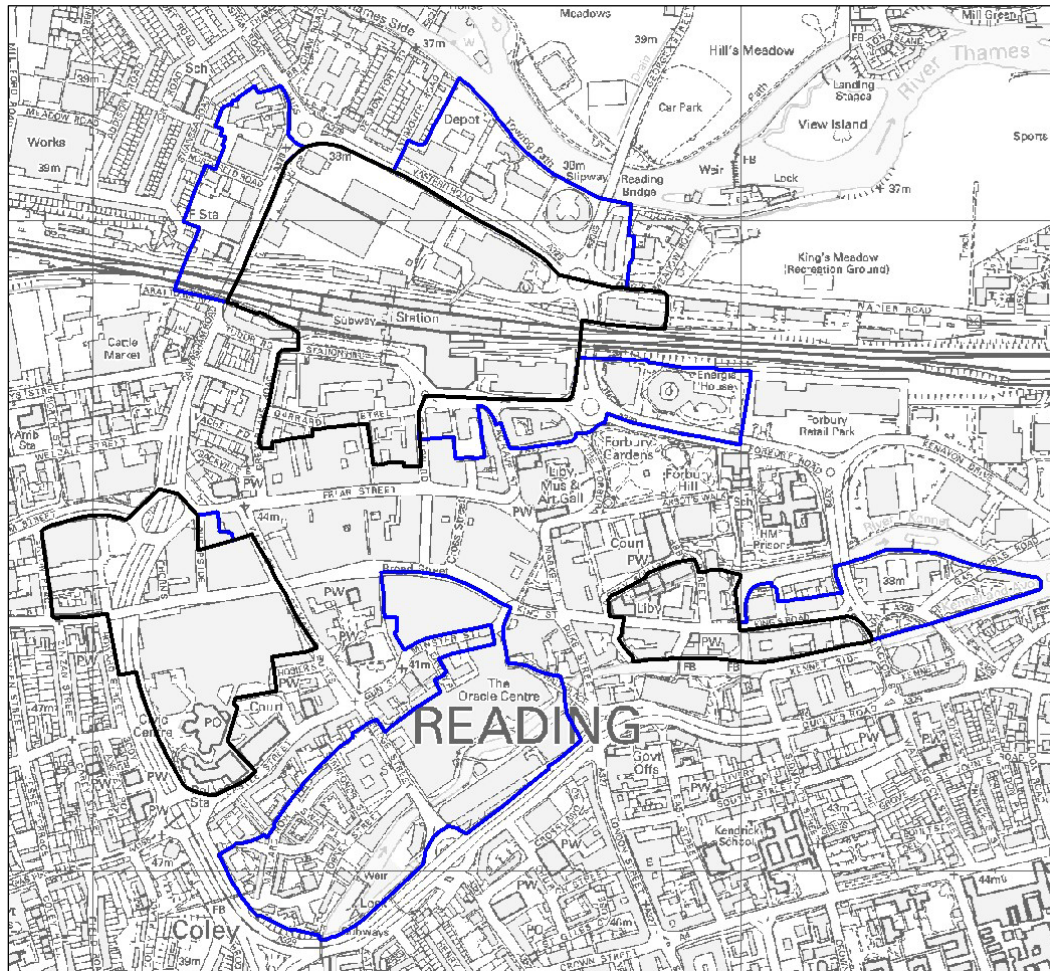
Policy response

- 9.10 In the context of the above, it is considered that there is a need for the policy to be updated to not wholly exclude the possibility of a tall building being located within one of the two types of area identified above. However, it should also be recognised that those areas continue to have a reduced suitability compared to the identified clusters due to the sensitivities of surrounding areas and other factors and that the overall cluster approach recommended by the TBS and which has been successfully implemented in recent years be retained.
- 9.11 The proposed response is therefore to identify the above as ‘areas of less suitability for tall buildings’ within which a clear case needs to be made that the cluster approach would not be undermined when views are considered and ensuring that all other aspects of the policy are fulfilled if a tall building is to be appropriate.
- 9.12 The only amendment that is made to the boundaries shown in figures 9.1 and 9.2 above is to ensure that areas within conservation areas are excluded. These are locations in which tall buildings would generally be inappropriate due to the importance of the historic character of the area. This means minor reductions in the boundary around Blagrove Street and Duke Street (due

to the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area) and Castle Street (due to the St Marys Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area).

- 9.13 Figure 9.3 shows the existing adopted clusters with a black boundary with the areas of lesser potential shown with a blue boundary.

Figure 9.3: Existing adopted clusters and areas of less suitability for tall buildings



Appendix 1: Updates to townscape analysis of character areas

2.1 This appendix contains the full analysis of townscape character of each character area. In each case, the original conclusion of the TBS is presented and then any changes to these conclusions from the updated analysis presented, including an updated conclusion on townscape sensitivity.

Table A1.1: Character area 1: Station Hill

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	A mixture of offices and retail land uses	These uses remain, although residential uses have also been introduced around Garrard Street. Significant increase in residential use is in progress.
Historical significance	Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce: post 1840. The Station building, Edward XVII statue and Great Western House (now Malmaison) are all listed.	No change
Architectural style	The architectural style is predominantly 1970s. Concrete is a widely used material. Ramps and staircases navigate the awkward spaces and level changes.	Much of the 1970s concrete architecture has now been demolished. The new station building, as well as the new office buildings, are of a modern architectural style.
Urban grain and townscape scale	The large block size and occasionally tall buildings, the tallest being Thames Tower (11 storeys) and Western Tower (17 storeys) create a large townscape scale.	Thames Tower has been extended by four storeys to 15 storeys (2017). One Station Hill is now complete and is 17 storeys. A large townscape scale remains, including the Reading Station building and Station Square south.
Townscape condition	The buildings are occasionally derelict and all are either of a poor condition or an unexceptional design quality. The spaces between the buildings are awkward shapes and sizes and poorly maintained. The overall effect is of a poor quality townscape.	The area is in the process of significant improvement. The station itself has been much improved with the new station having been completed together with a new station square and transport interchange. Thames Tower has been re-clad and is in improved condition. Most of the poorest quality areas have been demolished and significant redevelopment is underway.
Key views within the character area	-	A new route has been created through the public realm of Station Hill which gives some enhanced local views from the station at the north and Friar Street at the south, but these are not direct views between the two and would not constitute a new key view.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Key views into the character area	Views of current buildings within the character area are possible from the A4, A327 and A33 when travelling into the city. From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	No change, although Station Hill is increasing the prominence of views into the area.
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	Thames Tower and Western Tower both form localised focal points to views.	Western Tower has been demolished. The new Station building, although not tall, is a landmark within the area. A cluster of tall buildings formed by Thames Tower and Station Hill forms the major focal point.
Tall buildings planning applications	The 2007 application for the Station Hill site proposes residential units together with the proposed development at the Station Hill site would comprise no less than 577 and no more than 624 residential units together with office, retail, cultural and leisure land uses. The tallest building would range from 150-161 metres. There are two planning applications for tall buildings which have been approved.	Thames Tower has been extended upwards and refurbished. There have been a number of iterations of the Station Hill planning permission, and Phases 1 and 2 are now built out or in the latter stages of construction. The remainder of the site (Phase 3) has permission in outline, with the maximum height of Plot C rising to 163m AOD, which would be the tallest building in Reading if built to this height. Section 4 of this report contains more detail.
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Low: The large townscape scale, the absence of historic townscape features and the precedence for tall structures, all contribute to this area having a high capacity for the development of further tall buildings in terms of townscape character.	Townscape sensitivity remains low . Planning permissions and implemented schemes have continued to establish this as the primary opportunity for tall buildings.

Table A1.2: Character area 2: Reading Station East

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	Offices	No change.
Historical significance	Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce: post 1840 Adjacent to Forbury Gardens	No change.
Architectural style	1970s - late 20th century office blocks.	Addition of four more modern office blocks – three at and adjacent to the former Energis site, and one at former Aldwych House on Blagrove Street.
Urban grain and townscape scale	The individual buildings within the character area e.g Apex Plaza and Queens House are large and blocky structures which create a sense of large scale townscape.	The new additions to the area have only served to reinforce this large scale townscape.
Townscape condition	The buildings within the character area are of an unexceptional design and quality.	The more recent office additions are of good quality, and have generally enhanced the overall condition of the area.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Key views within the character area	No key views have been defined for this area.	No change.
Key views into the character area	From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	No change.
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	Apex plaza is a local landmark due to its height and distinctive pink colour. The Energis/Metal box is a local landmark due to its prominence and distinctive shape.	The Energis/Metal Box/Queens House building has been demolished, and replaced by two 8-storey office buildings which were completed in 2017. Adjacent to this is 3 Forbury Place, an 11-storey office building which was completed in 2010. Apex Plaza has been reclad and is no longer pink and its height is no longer significant when compared to surrounding office blocks.
Tall buildings planning applications	-	3 Forbury Place, an 11-storey office building which was completed in 2010. No more recent applications.
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Low: The high density of development within the character area, the characteristic large block size and the absence of historic townscape features within the area ensures a low sensitivity to the development of further tall buildings. The absence of any key views also contributes to this being an appropriate location when judged against townscape character criteria.	Townscape sensitivity remains low .

Table A1.3: Character area 3: Friar Street

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	Friar Street is a shopping street	It has a mix of retail and leisure uses including hotels, pubs, nightclubs, and shops, and residential at upper floors including Station Hill (Ebb & Flow development) and student housing to the corner of Friar Street and Greyfriars Road.
Historical significance	Ecclesiastical Town; AD1121-1539 Post-Dissolution Reading: AD 1539-1840 Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840	No change
Architectural style	The street has been redeveloped over many decades and as such the building frontage line has not been retained consistently and the architectural style is very varied. Some Victorian facades remain above the shop frontages but in many cases the architecture is undistinguished.	The street continues to be the focus of redevelopment with the most significant recent addition being Phase 1 of Station Hill (Ebb & Flow), which has introduced a significant gap in the building line to create linking public realm to the remainder of Station Hill.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Urban grain and townscape scale	The tightly packed buildings and the relatively low skyline (generally 4-6 storeys) creates a medium scale townscape.	The development of Station Hill (Ebb & Flow) introduces 8 storey equivalent to the Friar Street frontage with increasing heights as you move northwards. This has increased the scale of the townscape, for the overall Character area, however it is still largely of a medium scale at the Friar Street frontage.
Townscape condition	The buildings and public realm along the street is generally in good condition	This has been enhanced through the Ebb & Flow development, which comprises an opening in the building line with public realm, which links through to the remainder of Station Hill.
Key views within the character area	Views along Friar Street eastwards towards the Market Place and St. Lawrence's church.	No change eastwards. To the west the view along Friar Street is terminated with the Chatham Place tower.
Key views into the character area	From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	The changing development within the Character Area has altered the view to a degree.
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	The Ibis hotel is 14 storeys high Greyfriar's Church (at the western end of Friar Street)	No change.
Tall buildings planning applications		Station Hill Phase 1 (Ebb & Flow) is built and comprises tall buildings to the Garrard Street frontage at the northern edge of the Character Area. Permission was granted for 35-39 Friar Street under ref: PL/22/0933 for a mixed use scheme comprising a part 7, part 11 storey building with 103 C3 dwellings and Class E at basement and ground level, although this would not constitute a tall building.
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Medium: There is a fairly consistent, low rise roof line which is occasionally punctuated with views of taller structures e.g. Ibis hotel. Where the tall structures are visible, they detract from the cohesive character of the shopping street and are overbearing features of an uncharacteristically large scale. Therefore further tall buildings would exacerbate this characteristic further.	Townscape sensitivity remains medium albeit there are areas of taller buildings (Station Hill) existing and proposed, but these are set back from the main Friar Street frontage, which retains a more consistent roofline with older buildings. The tower at Chatham Place, visible at the western end of Friar Street (Part of Character Area 15), is a more distant element.

Table A1.4: Character area 4: Station Road

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	Predominantly retail, administrative and leisure use	In addition to retail, administration and leisure uses there is also residential use.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Historical significance	Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840 Adjacent to the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area.	No change.
Architectural style	The architectural styles are representative of the variety of historical periods during which buildings were erected. The row of Victorian, sandstone buildings on Queen Victoria Street are a notable townscape feature.	No change.
Urban grain and townscape scale	The building pattern is fine grained creating a sense of a high density of development, although the buildings are generally only 3 storeys. The townscape scale is medium.	No change.
Townscape condition	The buildings are generally in a good condition, notably on Queen Victoria Street. The public realm differs between Station Road and Queen Victoria street, the later being pedestrianised.	Largely unchanged other than a widening of the pavement on Station Road.
Key views within the character area	Key townscape features provide focus to views both to the north and south along Station Road and Queen Victoria Street. To the north the original station building is visible. To the south the façade of the John Lewis building is a focus to the view.	This is largely unchanged. The changes to Thames Tower on the western side of Station Road (outside the character area) slightly alter the view towards the Station.
Key views into the character area	From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	No change.
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	The sandstone buildings on Queen Victoria Street and the façade of the John Lewis building.	No change.
Tall buildings planning applications	-	None
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	High: Due to the positioning of the character area adjacent to the Market Place and London Street Conservation Area, tall buildings would not be an appropriate land use. They would be an uncharacteristically large scale feature and would become a prominent feature on the skyline. This would detract from the open skyline which is a fundamental feature of the historic character of the conservation Area. In addition, tall buildings along Queen Victoria Street would detract from the consistent architectural style and the roofline.	The townscape sensitivity remains high . There are views of some taller structures as background features, but any tall buildings within the character area would detract from the overall townscape and heritage assets.

Table A1.5: Character area 5: Broad Street

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	Broad Street is a main shopping street in Reading town centre, containing many primary shopping outlets.	No change
Historical significance	Ecclesiastical Town; AD1121-1539 Post-Dissolution Reading: AD 1539-1840 Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840 Adjacent to the St. Mary's Butts/Castle Hill Conservation Area and the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area.	No change
Architectural style	At street level the character of the frontages is determined by the branding of the retail outlets. Above, there are examples of Victorian and Georgian frontages together with examples of redeveloped frontages from various decades.	No change
Urban grain and townscape scale	The consistent built form on either side of the road is composed of medium sized shop units. In addition, the relatively low roofline creates a medium scaled townscape.	No change
Townscape condition	The buildings and public realm along the street is generally in a good condition.	No change
Key views within the character area	No key views have been identified for this character area.	No change
Key views into the character area	From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	No change
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	-	No change
Tall buildings planning applications	There are no landmark features within the character area.	No change
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Medium: The existing block size and scale of buildings on Broad Street ensures some capacity for the development of tall structures. However, the positioning of the character area adjacent to two Conservation Areas provides some constraints. Any tall buildings should be located in a position which ensures it will not become a dominant feature of the skyline above either Conservation Area.	Townscape sensitivity remains medium .

Table A1.6: Character area 6: St Laurence and Market Place

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	Predominantly retail, administrative and leisure use.	Residential uses at upper floors are now part of the mix of uses.
Historical significance	Ecclesiastical Town; AD1121-1539 Post-Dissolution Reading: AD 1539-1840 Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840.	No change.
Architectural style	The architectural styles are representative of the variety of historic periods during which buildings were erected. Notable features are the cluster of buildings which surround the market place, particularly the Town Hall and St Lawrence's Church.	No change.
Urban grain and townscape scale	This is a small scale area of townscape. The building pattern is fine grained, the roofline is low and although there are areas of open spaces in front of the church, Town Hall, and at Market Place, these are also small in scale and contained by the surrounding built form.	No change.
Townscape condition	The cluster of historic buildings focused around the market place is in a good condition and create a strong townscape character.	The Simeon Monument in the centre of Market Place has been cleaned and tidied, otherwise unchanged.
Key views within the character area	View across Market Place to the Town Hall and St Lawrence's church.	No change.
Key views into the character area	From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	No change.
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	St Lawrence's Church and the spire of the Victorian Town Hall.	No change.
Tall buildings planning applications	-	No change.
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	High: There is no capacity to develop tall structures in this character area as a result of the fine grained, small scale nature of the built form and the low rise, open skyline above the buildings which is a fundamental element of the historic character.	Townscape sensitivity remains high . The Blade is a background feature from certain parts of the Character area, but the townscape within the area itself remains small scale and the historic character is prevalent.

Table A1.7: Character area 7: Station Area West

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	Residential land use	Residential and commercial uses.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Historical significance	Ecclesiastical Town; AD1121-1539 Post-Dissolution Reading: AD 1539-1840 Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840.	No change.
Architectural style	Victorian 2-3 storey terraced residential properties interspersed with more recent small scale office/commercial development.	The south side of Tudor Road has been redeveloped with a 4/5 storey apartment block. The commercial building on the corner of Vachel Street has been refurbished and upgraded. There are no other changes.
Urban grain and townscape scale	The low rise, terraced housing creates a fine grained, small scale townscape.	No change.
Townscape condition	Buildings on Tudor Road are largely derelict creating a degraded character. To the south of the character area the terraced housing is in good condition and creates an area of strong residential character as the backdrop to views of Greyfriar's Church.	The buildings on Tudor Road have been redeveloped and are in residential use. New extensions to Greyfriars Church have been developed. No other significant change.
Key views within the character area	Views towards Greyfriar's church.	The completed parts of Station Hill along Garrard Street are tall buildings within areas 1 and 3 which can be viewed from the Character Area.
Key views into the character area	Views along west street to Greyfriar's Church which creates an attractive focal point. From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	No change.
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	Greyfriar's Church is located in this character area.	No change.
Tall buildings planning applications	-	No change.
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	High: The small scale, low rise and residential character of this area makes it inappropriate for the development of tall buildings.	Townscape sensitivity remains high .

Table A1.8: Character area 8: Forbury Gardens and Surroundings

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	The gardens comprise a Victorian formal garden, partially walled with a pond, bandstand and Maiwand Lion Statue. To the east of the gardens are the remains of Reading Abbey.	No change.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Historical significance	Anglo Saxon Foundation: AD 500-1121 Ecclesiastical Town; AD1121-1539 Post-Dissolution Reading: AD 1539-1840 Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840	No change.
Architectural style	The remains of the abbey in the east of the character area date from 1121. To the south of the character area the building style and age is variable, including the 5 storey, glass fronted office buildings on Forbury Square.	No change.
Urban grain and townscape scale	The park is the largest area of open space within the centre of Reading. The surrounding built form is visually prominent and has a large block size. These factors combine to create a large scale townscape.	No change.
Townscape condition	The well maintained gardens and surrounding built form is well managed and in good condition.	The Abbey Ruins were closed to the public due to their dangerous condition. However, conservation of the ruins was completed in 2018 and they are now re-opened to the public.
Key views within the character area	Glimpsed views of Western Tower and Thames Tower above the vegetated skyline. View from Forbury Gardens towards Abbey Gate	New tall buildings at Station Hill are visible from the area. The Blade in area 21, completed after the TBS was published, is prominent in the background from much of the character area, as are new office blocks north of Forbury Road.
Key views into the character area	From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	No change.
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	There are no landmark structures within the character area.	No change.
Tall buildings planning applications	A proposal for a 19 storey tower on what is now Forbury Square was refused in October 2000.	No change.
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	High: There is no capacity to develop buildings of this scale within the majority of the character area due to the townscape designations. Any tall buildings must consider the potential impact upon views to and from the designated townscapes/landscapes and must not dominate views of the Abbey and Forbury Gardens.	Townscape sensitivity remains high . Tall buildings have been visible from this area for many years, and this has been accentuated by the arrival of the Blade. However, they are very much features of the background, and the townscape designations of the area continue to have high sensitivity.

Table A1.9: Character area 9: Reading Prison

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	Reading prison	The prison closed in 2013 and remains vacant.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Historical significance	Anglo Saxon Foundation: AD 500-1121 Ecclesiastical Town; AD1121-1539 Post-Dissolution Reading: AD 1539-1840 Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840 Adjacent to the remains of reading Abbey and Forbury Gardens, both designated sites.	No change.
Architectural style	The main body of the prison is red brick and was constructed during the Victorian period	No change,
Urban grain and townscape scale	The buildings within this character area have a large block size, although are separated by paved areas which creates a sense of openness.	No change.
Townscape condition	The buildings are intact and occupied.	Reading Prison closed in 2013 and is vacant (apart from some temporary uses). The condition remains reasonable.
Key views within the character area	View from Kenavon Drive to the red brick wall and facade of Reading Prison.	No change. The tall building of The Blade is visible in the background within area 21 and Huntley Wharf a residential scheme within area 10 to the east.
Key views into the character area	From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	No change
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	The prison buildings themselves are a landmark structure, locally visible from character areas in the east of the study area.	The view of the prison from some positions the east is obscured by the presence of the new residential development at Huntley Wharf. However, the prison remains prominent from approaches further west along Kenavon Drive.
Tall buildings planning applications	-	No change
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Medium: The existing Victorian buildings are attractive townscape features which create a localised historic character. The development of tall buildings would detract from the historic character.	Townscape sensitivity remains medium .

Table A1.10: Character area 10: Forbury Retail Park

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	Land use includes recent large scale office developments, retail warehouses, car parks and commercial/office developments.	There has been significant residential development at Kenavon Drive and further residential development is expected.
Historical significance	Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840.	No change.
Architectural style	Buildings are predominantly late 20th century, corrugated iron and plastic clad retail units.	Some of the retail warehouse units remain present, although others have been replaced by recent residential development in the form of modern apartments and townhouses, with the height across the area gradually increasing from east to west.
Urban grain and townscape scale	The block size is large and there are numerous large warehouse buildings. This creates a large scale townscape.	Large blocks remain but with much finer-grained townscape at the eastern end. Residential flats on the southern edge of Kenavon Drive at Huntley Wharf are predominately large blocks and associated public realm along the River Kennet.
Townscape condition	All of the buildings are intact and occupied, but the scattered building, separated by expansive parking areas creates an indifferent townscape condition.	Townscape condition has improved significantly within the residential development, but some areas of poor townscape remain, particularly on the northern edge of Kenavon Drive in the remaining retail warehouse and former industrial areas.
Key views within the character area	From Kenavon Drive to the red brick wall and facade of Reading Prison.	Longer range views to the prison are largely obscured by Huntley Wharf.
Key views into the character area	From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	The changing development within the Character Area has altered the view to a degree.
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	Although a number of tall warehouses are present within the character area, their frequency results in none of them being particularly discernible as a landmark structure.	Large blocks of flats within Huntley Wharf have significantly increased the height and serve as landmarks. Most blocks are 7-8 storeys in height and there are three 11-storey buildings.
Tall buildings planning applications	-	-

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Medium: The area is characterised by large blocky structures. Therefore a tall building would not appear uncharacteristic in terms of urban grain and townscape scale. There are few key views which characterise the area and therefore tall buildings would not jeopardise the visual experiences of the area. However, there are no buildings over 10 storeys within the area. A significantly taller building would become visually prominent, although assuming careful consideration is given to the design and placing, the building could provide focus to the area.	Townscape sensitivity remains medium . The recent completions at Huntley Wharf together with the adjacent Forbury Place offices establish 8-10 storeys as a character of new development at the westernmost extent of the site, but the removal of many of the larger blocky structures also affects the sensitivity.

Table A1.11: Character area 11: Napier Road

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	Residential and retail (Tesco's).	No change.
Historical significance	Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840.	No change.
Architectural style	Late 20th century/early 21st century.	No change.
Urban grain and townscape scale	The buildings are fairly tightly packed and wedged between the railway line, Napier Road and the River Thames. Although the built form is tall, the individual block sizes are not very large. The numerous medium sized blocks separated by parking and landscaped areas creates a medium scale townscape.	A former car dealership just outside the character area at the western end has been demolished and replaced by a 23 storey residential building (Thames Quarter). The development of Thames Quarter at the western end of the site creates an entirely different townscape scale, but this is very much associated with the area around the station rather than the more tranquil character of the rest of Napier Road.
Townscape condition	The position of the character area squashed between the railway embankment and Napier Road creates the sense of this being a forgotten area. The combination of building heights and style, none of which are distinctive townscape elements, creates a weak townscape character.	Other than for Thames Quarter (above) there is little change and townscape character remains weak.
Key views within the character area	No key views have been defined for this character area.	No change.
Key views into the character area	From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	Thames Quarter is now visible from many of the identified views of Reading.
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	The 10 storey apartment blocks of Luscinia View.	The new Thames Quarter building is significantly taller than other buildings in the area and serves as a landmark.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Tall buildings planning applications	-	-
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Medium: Existing 10 storey apartment blocks are prominent features and ensures that buildings of a similar height would not appear uncharacteristic. However, the consistent height of the existing roofline and the residential character of the area ensure that significantly taller buildings would appear uncharacteristic in townscape terms.	Townscape sensitivity remains medium . There is a clear distinction between the site of Thames Quarter (which the TBS subsequently proposed as part of the Station Cluster) and the remainder of the area where there are stronger townscape and landscape considerations.

Table A1.12: Character area 12: Caversham Road

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	Residential	Residential with some limited commercial and hotel uses.
Historical significance	Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840	No change.
Architectural style	Two storey, red brick, terraced housing	No change.
Urban grain and townscape scale	The low rise, terraced housing creates a small scale townscape.	No change.
Townscape condition	The buildings are in good condition. The consistent architectural style create a strong townscape character.	No change.
Key views within the character area	View from Caversham Bridge westwards	No change.
Key views into the character area	From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	No change.
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	There are no landmarks structures within the character area.	No change.
Tall buildings planning applications	-	No change.
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	High: There is a low capacity for the development of buildings of this scale due to the low rise, small scale residential character which predominates. Taller buildings would dilute the townscape pattern and would be uncharacteristic. The area is also inappropriate in terms of market demand and transport connections.	Townscape sensitivity remains high .

Table A1.13: Character area 13: The Cattle Market and Chatham Place

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	Mixed use	No change.
Historical significance	Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840	The Holy Trinity Church and nearby buildings on Oxford Road have been included within the extended Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road conservation area. However, this does not significantly affect the sensitivity as two of these are listed in any case.
Architectural style	The Architectural style is variable including the large sheds and expansive car parking on the site of the Cattle Market and depot which is to the north of the character area and 3 storey residential blocks along Weldale Street	The architectural style is still varied, but with newer modern, brick residential developments.
Urban grain and townscape scale	Buildings are of a variable height and block size but cumulatively create a medium scaled townscape.	Recent development has largely reinforced the prevailing 4-6 storey height, although there are recent taller buildings between Weldale Street and Chatham Place.
Townscape condition	The variety of building styles, block sizes and materials creates a weak townscape character.	New buildings have improved the townscape in this area, although there are still areas in need of improvement.
Key views within the character area	No key views have been defined for this area.	Buildings in Station Hill are now prominent.
Key views into the character area	From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	No change.
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	There are no landmark structures within the character area.	No change.
Tall buildings planning applications	-	A development at Weldale Street is underway, with the initial phases already complete. This rises to 11 residential storeys and does not include tall buildings, although the initial pre-application proposal did include provision of a tall building, which was subsequently reduced.
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Medium: The existing large block sizes of built form at the cattle market site and the degraded townscape condition all contribute to a high capacity for the development of tall buildings. However, despite the suitability of this area, the height would be restricted by the surrounding small scale residential areas. Consideration should be given on a case by case basis to the appropriateness of tall building height in relation to these areas of strong residential character.	Townscape sensitivity remains medium . The issue has been explored in the Weldale Street planning application, which confirmed the south eastern corner as the greatest potential for height, albeit still within policy parameters. The small scale residential areas remain in place.

Table A1.14: Character area 14: Oxford Road and surroundings

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	Residential and some retail on Oxford Road	No change.
Historical significance	Russell St./Castle Hill Conservation Area Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840	The Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road conservation area has been extended to include buildings on both sides of Oxford Road, giving greater significance to the street's heritage. The street has also been a key part of the High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) programme, leading to physical improvements in matters such as public realm and shopfronts.
Architectural style	Red brick, low rise terraced housing	No significant change.
Urban grain and townscape scale	The low rise, terraced housing forms a small scale townscape	No change.
Townscape condition	The consistent architectural style and use of red brick creates a strong townscape character. The individual buildings are generally in good condition, although the signage associated with some of the units on Oxford Road clutters the townscape.	Some improvements to signage, shopfronts and street environment as part of the HSHAZ.
Key views within the character area	No key views have been defined for this area.	No change.
Key views into the character area	Views along the Oxford Road to Fountains House From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	View to Chatham Place is prominent looking eastwards along Chatham Street.
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	Fountains House acts as a focal point to views from Oxford Road.	No change.
Tall buildings planning applications	-	No change.
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	High: There is a high sensitivity to the development of tall buildings within the character area which has a small scale, low rise, and residential townscape character. Tall buildings outside of the area are currently visible (Fountains House) and highlight the location of the central area. Tall buildings within this area would weaken this relationship.	Townscape sensitivity remains high . The central area to the east includes existing tall buildings which are visible from this Character area and any tall buildings within it would have the same effect as originally assessed.

Table A1.15: Character area 15: Chatham Place

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	Retail	Significant increase in residential use.
Historical significance	Ecclesiastical Town; AD1121-1539; Post-Dissolution Reading: AD 1539-1840; Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840. Adjacent to St. Mary's Butts Conservation Area	78-104 Oxford Road now falls within the extended Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area. This introduces greater historic sensitivity to the area, albeit the character of these buildings has not changed.
Architectural style	1970s concrete blocks	There are more modern blocks as part of the Chatham Place development and the conversion of Yell, which is now the student housing of Queens Court. The elevation of Broad Street Mall facing Queens Walk has been refurbished and updated with activity at ground floor.
Urban grain and townscape scale	The block size is large, incorporating the covered Broad Street Mall shopping centre. Above the Broad Street Mall shopping centre is a 12 storey tower. These features combine to create a large scale townscape	Chatham Place and Queens Court developments have continued the large-scale townscape.
Townscape condition	Currently the character area is intersected by the IDR. The individual townscape elements are either large, blocky buildings or construction sites. There are no notable townscape features.	New development has improved the overall townscape condition, but the IDR remains a dominant and unattractive feature.
Key views within the character area	Along West Street to Greyfriar's Church	No change.
Key views into the character area	Buildings within the character area contribute to the skyline visible from Oxford Road when approaching Reading from the west. From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	The tower at Chatham Street is visible in most panoramic views of central Reading and from many parts of the Centre.
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	Fountains House acts as a focal point to views from Oxford Road.	Chatham Place includes one 19 residential storey buildings and there is an increase in height around it and with some additional height, but below 10 storeys, at Queens Court.
Tall buildings planning applications	-	There is a current application for tall buildings, a part redevelopment of Broad Street Mall (PL/24/0173). This would comprise 4 towers of 30, 26, 19 and 8 storeys. Permission already exists for a similar development in this location that would also result in residential towers, but this is not expected to be implemented.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Low: The existing built form is large scale and blocky, ensuring that tall buildings would not result in a significant change to the urban grain. The absence of notable townscape features ensures a suitability for re-development. However, careful consideration should be given on a case by case basis to how tall buildings would impact upon key views along West Street to Greyfriar's Church and to how they would be viewed from and impact upon views of St. Mary's Church. It is proposed that new building directly abutting St. Mary's Butts should not be tall structures. Any tall buildings should be set back from this road and the Conservation Area.	Townscape sensitivity remains low , reinforced by new permissions and developments. However, the sensitivity of the key views as identified remains as in the original TBS.

Table A1.16: Character area 16: The Civic Centre

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	The area is dominated by large scale buildings including the Civic Centre, the Hexagon Theatre and Fountain House	The Civic Centre, the most dominant feature of the area, has been demolished and the civic uses relocated.
Historical significance	Anglo Saxon Foundation: AD 500-1121 Ecclesiastical Town; AD1121-1539 Post-Dissolution Reading: AD 1539-1840 Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840 Adjacent to the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area	No change except that the adjacent Conservation Area has been significantly extended along Oxford Road as well as other additions and renamed Russell Street/Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area (adopted 2020)
Architectural style	1970s concrete blocks	Demolition of some of the 1970s blocks - Civic Centre.
Urban grain and townscape scale	The cluster of buildings with a large block size, and the elevated roofline created by Fountains House forms a large scale townscape.	Despite the demolition of the Civic Centre the townscape continues to be large scale.
Townscape condition	The large concrete blocks which characterise this area are unexceptional in terms of design and quality. This creates a poor townscape character.	Demolition of some of the 1970s blocks - Civic Centre.
Key views within the character area	Views from the Civic Centre to St Mary's Church and Conservation Area	No change.
Key views into the character area	Buildings within the character area contribute to the skyline visible from Oxford Road when approaching Reading from the west. From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	No change.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	Fountains House acts as a focal point to views from Oxford Road.	No change.
Tall buildings planning applications	A planning application is expected to be submitted for a new civic centre and mixed use development in this area during 2008. Previous consultations on the masterplan for this area have included one or two tall buildings (up to 30 storeys), but proposals are still evolving.	The Civic Centre is now demolished and this Character area is part of the Minster Quarter Area Outline Development Framework (Dec 2018). Tall buildings are envisaged for this Character Area, but there are no formal planning applications at present.
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Low: Due to the large scale of the individual elements of the character area, a tall building would not appear uncharacteristic. A tall building could provide structure and focus to the character area which is currently composed of poor quality, undistinguished buildings which creates a weak townscape character. However, careful consideration should be given to retaining glimpsed views to St. Mary's church and the surrounding Conservation Area and it is essential that the building does not become an intrusive and dominant feature of the skyline of views towards St. Mary's Conservation Area.	Townscape sensitivity remains low . However, the sensitivity of the key views as identified remains as in the original TBS.

Table A1.17: Character area 17: St Mary's and Castle Street

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	The building uses are varied, but mainly comprise retail and small offices creating predominantly active frontages.	No significant change, but there is further residential use resulting from conversions.
Historical significance	Anglo Saxon Foundation: AD 500-1121 Ecclesiastical Town; AD1121-1539 Post-Dissolution Reading: AD 1539-1840 Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840 Within St. Mary's/Castle Hill Conservation Area	No change. The Conservation Area is named St Mary's Butts/ Castle Street.
Architectural style	Varied including red brick and half timbered	No change.
Urban grain and townscape scale	The low rise skyline and tightly packed buildings create a fine grained, small scale townscape.	No change.
Townscape condition	The cluster of historic buildings is in good condition and creates a localised area of strong historic character.	No change.
Key views within the character area	Views along Castle Street eastwards View along St. Mary's Butts to St. Mary's church	No significant change although the spire of The Blade is visible in views eastwards.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Key views into the character area	View from Character area 16 (the civic Centre) towards St. Mary's Church Buildings within the character area contribute to the skyline visible from Oxford Road when approaching Reading from the west. From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	No change.
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	St. Mary's Church	No change.
Tall buildings planning applications	-	No change.
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	High: The Conservation Area designation makes this an inappropriate area for the development of tall buildings. The tall buildings would detract from the historic character.	The townscape sensitivity remains high .

Table A1.18: Character area 18: The Oracle

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	The Oracle is a single development that fills the space between Broad Street, Mill Lane, Bridge Street and Duke Street. It provides a major shopping centre for Reading town centre, with the main access from Broad Street. The Kennet and Avon canal flows through the centre of the development. It is a key feature of the site and forms the focus of a civic space which includes seating, play spaces and cafes.	No significant change apart from some changes in occupation and a new building on the northern side of the canal and additional structures on the southern side in front of the Vue Cinema.
Historical significance	Ecclesiastical Town; AD1121-1539 Post-Dissolution Reading: AD 1539-1840 Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840 Adjacent to the Russel Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area	No change. Noting that the relevant Conservation Area is St. Mary's Butts/ Castle Street and that it is also adjacent to the Market Place/London Street conservation area.
Architectural style	Late 20th century. Buildings materials are variable including concrete, brick and glass.	No change.
Urban grain and townscape scale	The large expanse of covered shopping centre and occasionally tall structures creates a large scale townscape.	No change.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Townscape condition	Although the design of the Oracle building is unexceptional, the public realm along the River Kennet is an attractive and well used resource which is in good condition.	No change part from an additional building on the northern side and additional structures on the southern side in front of the Vue Cinema.
Key views within the character area	Views along the Kennet and Avon canal eastwards	No change.
Key views into the character area	Buildings within the character area contribute to the skyline visible from Oxford Road when approaching Reading from the west. From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	No change.
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	The general roofline of this character area is 3/4 storeys, with occasional taller buildings up to 9 storeys. The rooflines of these taller buildings are designed in such a way that their design, as well as their height stands out from the surrounding roofscape. For example the angular, glass structure which is located on the roof above the Oracle on the south side of the Kennet and Avon Canal.	No change.
Tall buildings planning applications	-	There are currently two applications which include tall buildings: One for the eastern end of the Oracle up to Yield Hall Place (ref: 22/1916) which includes two main buildings, one of which is a 21 storey building, and one for the area of Vue Cinema up to Yield Hall Place comprising three main buildings two of which are tall buildings (13 and 16 storeys ref: 22/1917). These are currently undetermined.
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Low: The large block size and existing landmark structures (e.g. spire on the car park) create a high capacity for the development of tall buildings. However, consideration should be given on a case by case basis to how the development would impact on the skyline above St Mary's church and the surrounding Conservation Area.	Townscape sensitivity remains low .

Table A1.19: Character area 19: Mallard Row to Fobney Street

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	Predominately residential apartments which are located on the north and south banks of the Kennet and Avon Canal although there is also some office use.	No significant change, although the offices are now the Civic offices.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Historical significance	Anglo-Saxon Foundation: AD 50-1121 Ecclesiastical Town; AD1121-1539 Post-Dissolution Reading: AD 1539-1840 Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840 Adjacent to the St. Mary's Butts Castle Street Conservation Area	No change.
Architectural style	The buildings are predominantly late 20th century, brick structures.	No change.
Urban grain and townscape scale	The apartment buildings separated by small blocks of ornamental planting create a medium scale townscape.	No change.
Townscape condition	The Buildings within the character area are occupied, functioning buildings. They do not either contribute to a sense of good quality townscape or detract from it.	No change.
Key views within the character area	No key views have been identified for this area.	No change.
Key views into the character area	Buildings within the character area contribute to the skyline visible from Oxford Road when approaching Reading from the west. From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	No change.
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	Although the apartment buildings are taller than those in some of the surrounding areas such as the St Mary's Butts Conservation Area, the consistent rows of apartment blocks, and their location immediately to the west of the Oracle, ensures that the apartment buildings blend into the general elevated roofline, and are not in themselves distinctive features.	No change.
Tall buildings planning applications	-	No change.
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Low: The area is characterised by apartment block buildings which are taller than the average residential built form in Reading. The apartment blocks create a medium sized townscape scale and urban grain. Buildings up to 10 storeys would not appear uncharacteristic in townscape terms. However, should built form taller than 10 storeys be proposed, careful consideration should be given to how the increased scale and density of development would impact upon St. Mary's Butts Conservation Area.	Townscape sensitivity remains low .

Table A1.20: Character area 20: London Street

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	Residential	There is a mix of residential and commercial uses, with a number of conversions from former offices to residential. There is a new residential flatted scheme on the corner of Silver Street and Crown Street.
Historical significance	Ecclesiastical Town; AD1121-1539 Post-Dissolution Reading: AD 1539-1840 Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840	No change.
Architectural style	Red brick, low rise terraced housing	There is a mix of traditional red brick and rendered town houses, terraces, and higher scale modern flatted schemes.
Urban grain and townscape scale	The fine grained residential area has a small townscape scale.	The overall scale ranges from 2 storey terraces up to 6 storey blocks to the margins of the Character area, but there were already large scale buildings at the edges at the time fo the original TBC. The predominant townscape scale is small
Townscape condition	The buildings within the character area are fairly consistent in architectural style creating a strong, residential townscape character. The townscape is generally in good condition, although the busy A327 and associated road signage and advertising boards create a localised cluttered character.	London Street itself retains a consistent architectural style, although newer developments have introduced some variation. The townscape remains in generally good condition, but closer to significant roads the clutter and lower quality townscape remain.
Key views within the character area	No key views have been identified for this area.	No change.
Key views into the character area	Buildings within the character area contribute to the skyline visible from Oxford Road when approaching Reading from the west. From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	No change.
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	St. Giles Church is a key feature of views both within the character area and from surrounding areas.	No change.
Tall buildings planning applications	-	No change.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	High: The small scale, residential nature of this character area makes it inappropriate for the development of tall buildings. tall buildings in central reading are visible from parts of the area as a skyline feature. The development of tall buildings within the character area would weaken this relationship.	Townscape sensitivity remains as high .

Table A1.21: Character area 21: Forbury South

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	Predominantly large office use interspersed with smaller scale buildings such as Blake's cottages and a pub.	There is a greater proportion of residential along Kings Road s a result of conversions and development.
Historical significance	Ecclesiastical Town; AD 1121-1539 Post-Dissolution Reading: AD 1539-1840 Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840	No change.
Architectural style	Predominantly 1970s - late 20th Century concrete blocks.	No significant change although a number of blocks have been refurbished and converted including the redevelopment of Kings Point at the eastern end of the Character area (Verto).
Urban grain and townscape scale	The large block size of the buildings creates a large scale townscape.	No change.
Townscape condition	The variable building style, heights and materials creates a weak townscape character. The busy A329 intersects the area and creates a disjointed character. There are a number of vacant buildings along the kings Road which creates a slightly degraded character.	The townscape character has been strengthened with new developments, conversions and refurbishments.
Key views within the character area	View along Wallington Street to the twin spires of St John's Church and the Methodist Chapel.	No change.
Key views into the character area	Buildings within the character area contribute to the skyline visible from Oxford Road when approaching Reading from the west. From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	The Blade and Verto are now prominent from many viewpoints.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	King's Point is a 7 storey building which is visually prominent feature on Wallington Street.	Kings Point has now been demolished and replaced with 17 storey Verto building. The Blade is 15 storeys, but with a significantly higher spire, and is now a landmark structure. The redevelopment of offices at 80-82 Kings Road has resulted in a ten storey residential building, which is prominent in views from the Kennet and Avon Canal.
Tall buildings planning applications	Abbey Mill House is a 15 storey building with planning permission. Planning permission has been granted for a building of up to 14 storeys on the site of the existing King's Point building.	Abbey Mill House has now been built out (The Blade) in the form expected at the time of the original TBS. Kings Point has been demolished and replaced with a taller building of 17 storeys (Verto).
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Low: The existing large block size and the presence of buildings up to 7 storeys and construction of a building up to 15 storeys ensures that a building of up a similar height would not be uncharacteristic. However, due to proximity to Reading Abbey, careful consideration should be given on a case by case basis to potential visual impacts which may result.	Townscape sensitivity remains low but the continued presence of Reading Abbey and other heritage assets requires the continued consideration of visual impacts on a case by case basis.

Table A1.22: Character area 22: Vastern Road

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	Warehouses and retail park	The major land uses remain the same. The redevelopment of the Station with a northern entrance has brought the public transport interchange into the heart of the area and enhanced access to the centre through the underpass.
Historical significance	Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840	No change.
Architectural style	The predominant material is coloured, metal cladding	No change.
Urban grain and townscape scale	The building blocks have a large floor space, although the buildings are not high rise and there is extensive car parking adjacent to the buildings. These features combine to create a medium scale townscape.	No change except for Thames Quarter at the eastern edge of the Character area which is up to 23 storeys. The predominant scale is of a medium townscape. Extant permissions would significantly alter both the urban grain (through introduction of new routes for pedestrians and cyclists, including a new link to the Thames) and townscape scale through considerable increases in height.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Townscape condition	The large, blank faces of the warehouses create an unexceptional area of townscape which does not respond well to the surrounding residential land use. Although the buildings are occupied and function well for their purpose, their design is unattractive and creates a weak and uninspiring area of townscape.	There is no significant change, although there is some improvement resulting from the new station entrance.
Key views within the character area	There are no key views defined for the character area.	No change.
Key views into the character area	Buildings within the character area contribute to the skyline visible from Oxford Road when approaching Reading from the west. From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	The Thames Quarter building on the eastern end of the Character area is now visible from many views within Reading.
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	The large, warehouse structures create a consistent, unexceptional townscape. There are no landmark structures. Although the warehouses create a roofline which is elevated above the surrounding residential buildings, there is no one structure which is notable as a tall building.	The Thames Quarter building is the only new tall building within the Character area at the current time. The northern entrance of the station building along with the opened up bus interchange on Trooper Potts Way has become prominent. Christchurch Bridge (opened in 2015) is a landmark on the River, but currently is visually separated from the Character Area.
Tall buildings planning applications	-	There are a number of new permissions for tall buildings. 80 Caversham Road (ref 18/2252) is an outline permission for a mix of uses including residential that could include several tall buildings with a maximum height of 114m AOD. Vastern Court (ref 20/0328) has an outline planning permission granted by the Secretary of State for a mixed use development that would consist of four plots, each of which could deliver tall buildings, with a maximum height of 113 AOD. 55 Vastern Road, granted on appeal (ref 23/1673), would not deliver tall buildings but rises to 11 residential storeys at its highest point, and has now been implemented.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Low: The large block size which exists within the character area and the absence of any key views or visual focal point makes this an appropriate location for tall buildings. However it is proposed that tall structures should not be developed along the north and western boundaries of the character area as these boundaries are shared with small scale residential areas. any proposed built form should respond in terms of height and scale to the residential area. The tallest structures should be located to the south of the character area, adjacent to the railway line. In this area the townscape features are larger scale, and adjacent to large scale features outside of the area e.g. existing station buildings, Thames Tower and Western Tower.	Townscape sensitivity remains low . The recent permissions have strongly confirmed this as a location for tall buildings.

Table A1.23: Character area 23: King's Meadow

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	Sports ground and river meadows	No change.
Historical significance	-	The Kings Meadow Baths, a Victorian facility, was reopened in 2017 as Thames Lido.
Architectural style	N/A	No. change.
Urban grain and townscape scale	The large expanse of open meadows creates a large townscape scale.	No change.
Townscape condition	The meadows are a well maintained recreational resource and contribute positively to the townscape character.	No change.
Key views within the character area	The open views across the meadows to the wooded skyline created by bankside vegetation, has been identified as a key view.	No change.
Key views into the character area	From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	No change.
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	-	Within the Character area is the Christchurch Bridge opened in 2015, a new foot and cycle bridge over the Thames. The 39m high bridge support is tall within the local context.
Tall buildings planning applications	-	No change.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	High: The majority of the site is protected open space and therefore inappropriate as a location for tall buildings.	Townscape sensitivity remains high .

Table A1.24: Character area 24: Kennet Walk

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	Residential	No change.
Historical significance	Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840	No change.
Architectural style	Late 20th century apartment buildings	No change.
Urban grain and townscape scale	The apartment buildings separated by small blocks of ornamental planting create a medium scaled townscape. The quiet, narrow roads create a 'homezone' type character.	No change.
Townscape condition	The Buildings within the character area are occupied, functioning buildings. They do not either contribute to a sense of good quality townscape or detract from it.	No change.
Key views within the character area	There are no key views defined for the character area.	No change.
Key views into the character area	Buildings within the character area contribute to the skyline visible from Oxford Road when approaching Reading from the west. From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	No change.
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	The gas storage facility in the east of the character area.	The gas holder, just outside the Character area, was demolished in 2022.
Tall buildings planning applications	-	No change. There is an implemented permission on the former gas holder site, but this will not be tall buildings (ref: 19/0627)
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	High: There is a high capacity for the development of buildings of ten storeys as the existing skyline is composed of a number of buildings of this scale. However, the residential 'homezone' character make this an inappropriate location for a very tall building which would dominate and become an iconic structure.	Townscape sensitivity remains high .

Table A1.25: Character area 25: IDR West

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	The IDR and immediately adjacent buildings which include an office building and two churches	No change.
Historical significance	Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840	No change.
Architectural style	The IDR is the dominant feature of the character area. The office building is of mid to late 20th century design	The office building was refurbished and is now known as the Light Box.
Urban grain and townscape scale	N/A	No change.
Townscape condition	The IDR is an overpowering feature which detracts from the quality of the townscape.	No change.
Key views within the character area	There are no key views defined for the character area.	No change.
Key views into the character area	Buildings within the character area contribute to the skyline visible from Oxford Road when approaching Reading from the west. From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	No change.
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	The most dominant feature of views is the IDR	No change.
Tall buildings planning applications	-	No change.
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Medium: The built form to the western side of the IDR is small scale, low rise residential. Any tall buildings developed on the western side of the IDR would overshadow this land use and would be uncharacteristic in terms of height, block size and building materials.	Townscape sensitivity remains medium .

Table A1.26: Character area 26: Kings Road

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Land Use	Office buildings	A number of office buildings have been converted to residential use.
Historical significance	Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840	No change.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Architectural style	Predominantly late 20th century design	Some additional 21 st century developments.
Urban grain and townscape scale	The large block size of the buildings and the wide A329 create a large scale townscape	No change.
Townscape condition	The building within the character area are generally occupied, functioning buildings. They do not either contribute to a sense of good quality townscape or detract from it.	No change.
Key views within the character area	There are no key views defined for this character area	No change.
Key views into the character area	Buildings within the character area contribute to the skyline visible from Oxford Road when approaching Reading from the west. From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	No change.
Landmark structures and existing tall buildings	There are no notable key landmark features	Two residential blocks Q (9 storey) and the adjacent Q2 (10 storey) at the eastern end of the Character area were completed by 2010. They are prominent in views eastwards along Queens Road and are adjacent to and prominent from the Conservation Area.
Tall buildings planning applications	There are no known tall building applications for this area.	No change.
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Medium: The large block size of existing built form ensures that a tall building would not be uncharacteristic in terms of townscape scale, or detract from the existing urban grain.	Townscape sensitivity remains medium . The Eldon Square conservation area increases the sensitivity to the east of the area.

Appendix 2: Changes to identified views

Viewpoint A



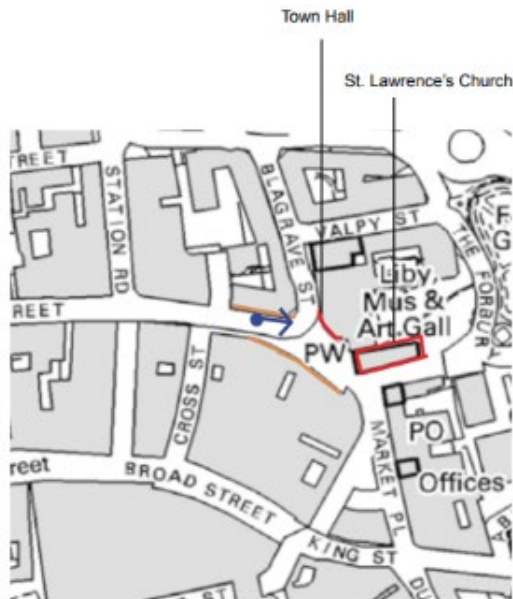
Original view from 2008 TBS



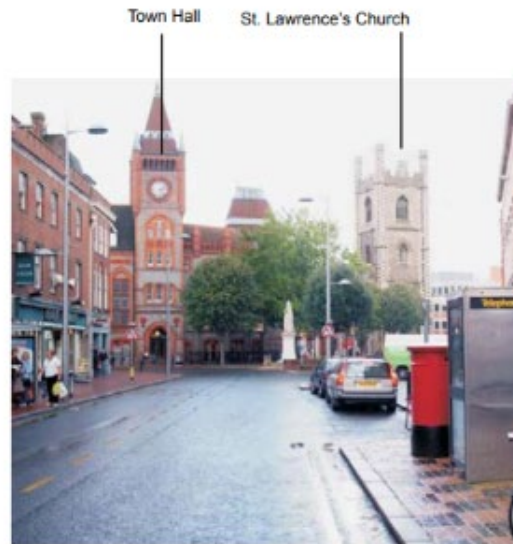
Updated view March 2025

The view is virtually identical to the view compared to the original 2008 TBS. The view continues to have a high sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings as a result of the low rise skyline in which St. Lawrence's Church is the focal point.

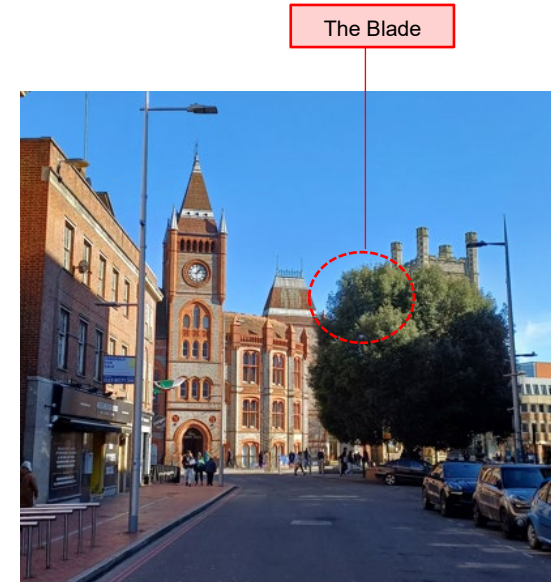
Viewpoint B



Viewpoint B: view along Friar Street to St. Lawrence Church and the Town Hall



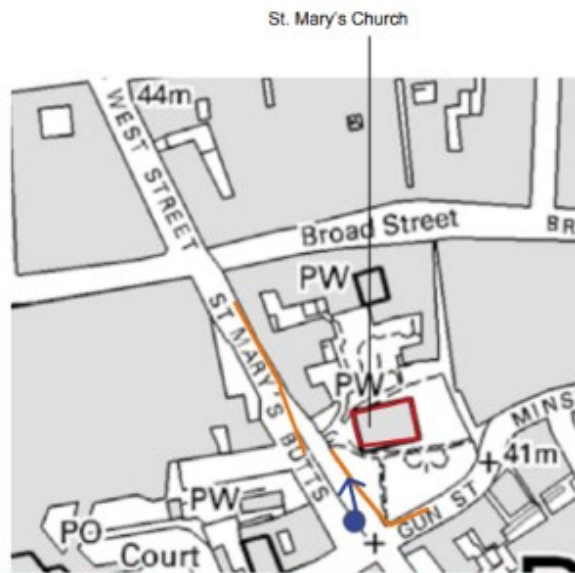
Original view from 2008 TBS



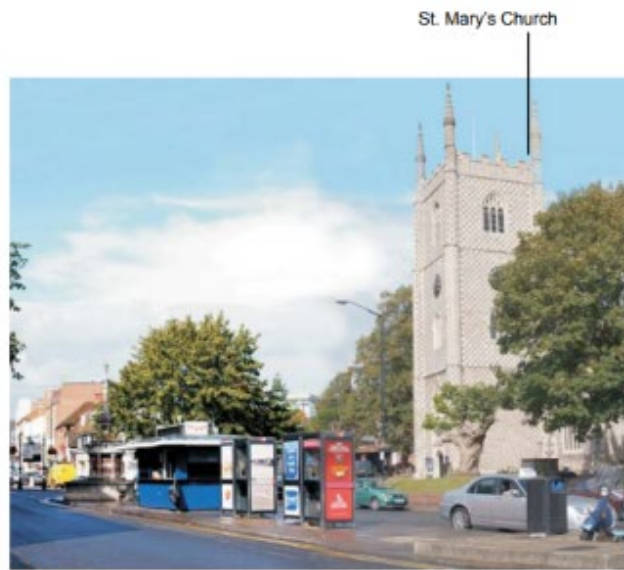
Updated view March 2025

There have been no significant changes to this view compared to the original 2008 TBS. In the 2018 update of this document the Blade was visible in the skyline between the town hall and church, but within the background and subservient to the towers of the church and town hall. However, the tree in front of the statue is now so prominent that this not only prevents the direct view of the Blade, but also largely obscures the view of the church tower. This view continues to have a high sensitivity to the introduction of tall buildings.

Viewpoint C



Viewpoint C: View of St Mary's Church and churchyard from St. Mary's Butts



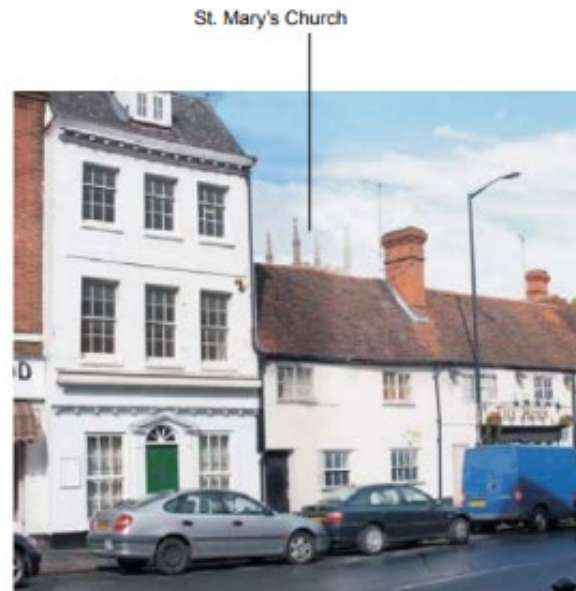
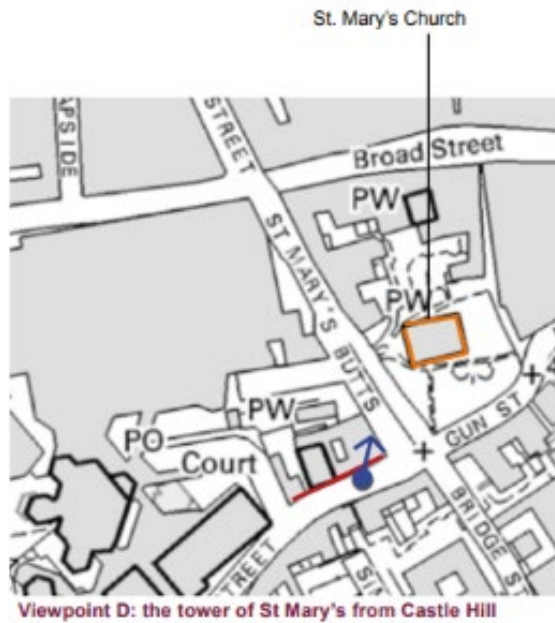
Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

There have been no significant changes to this view compared to the original 2008 TBS and there are no tall buildings visible. St. Mary's Church continues to be the tallest building on the skyline, with the remaining buildings significantly smaller in height and scale. This view continues to have a high sensitivity to the introduction of tall buildings.

Viewpoint D



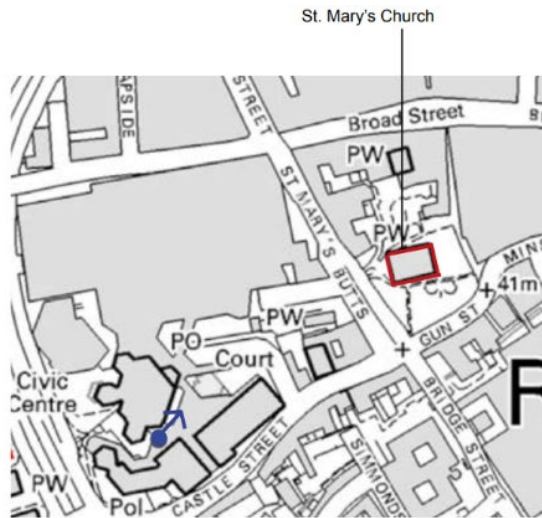
Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

The view remains virtually identical to the 2008 TBS and no tall buildings are currently visible. The view continues to have a high sensitivity to the inclusion of a tall building.

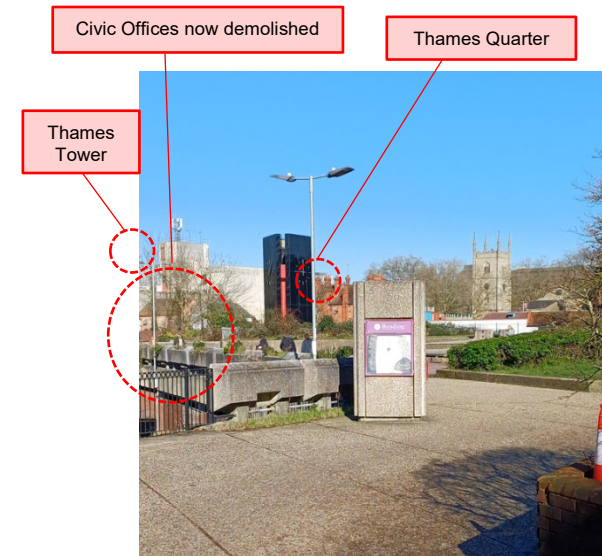
Viewpoint E



Viewpoint E: view from the civic centre towards St. Mary's Church and Conservation Area



Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

The key change to this view is that the Council's offices were demolished by 2016, which has removed the original western edge frame of this view creating even more open views and towards St. Mary's church tower and buildings. Thames Quarter is just visible in the background above the red brick buildings on St. Mary's Butts. Turning slightly westwards (left) the extended Thames Tower would come into view in the background. The view remains dominated by concrete and there remains scope for improvement. It continues to have a medium sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings.

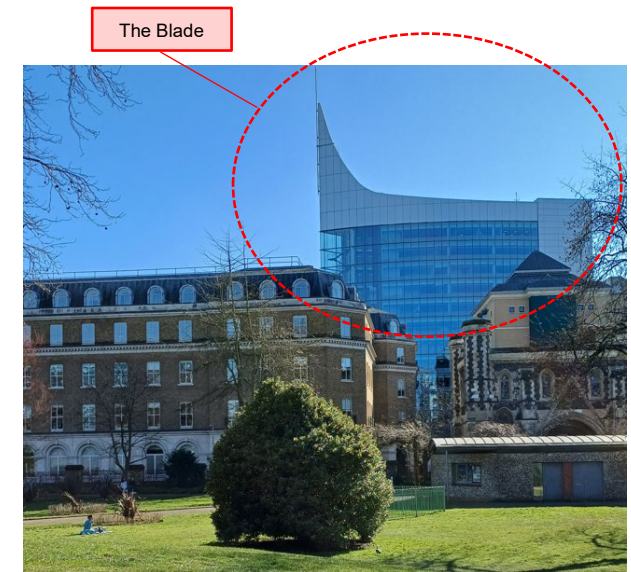
Viewpoint F



Viewpoint F: From Forbury Gardens towards Abbey Gate



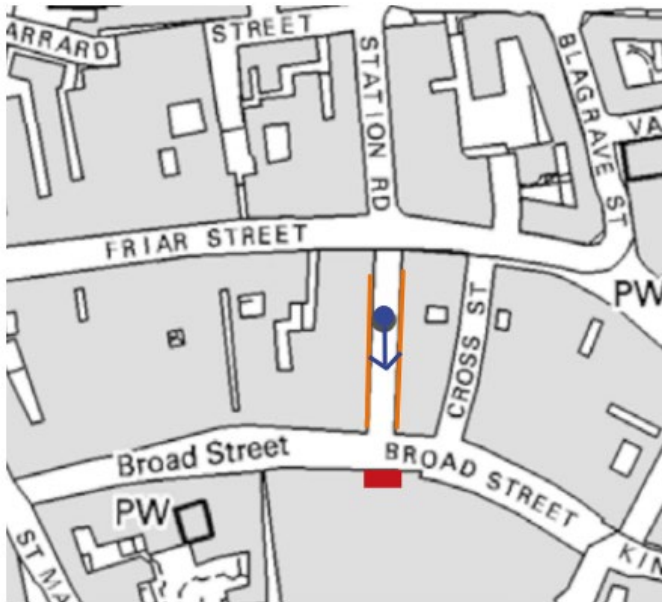
Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

This view has significantly changed with the development of The Blade which terminates the view along Abbey Street. It is significantly taller than any other buildings within the view. Considerable thought will need to be given as to how any further tall buildings will appear in this view and it continues to have a high sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings.

Viewpoint G



Viewpoint G: view along Queen Victoria Street towards John Lewis building



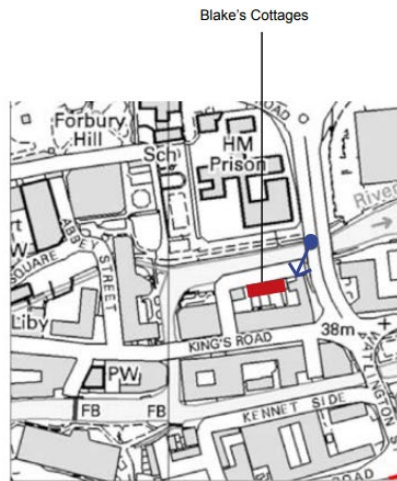
Original view from 2008 TBS



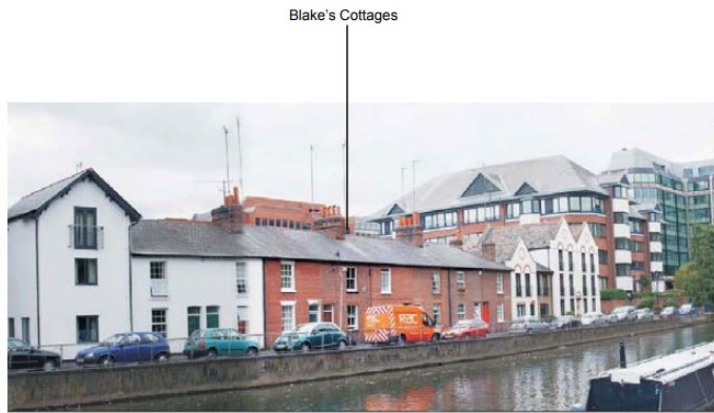
Updated view March 2025

The view remains virtually identical to the original 2008 TBS view. No tall buildings are currently visible, and it continues to have a high sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings.

Viewpoint H



Viewpoint H: view along Kennet and Avon Canal towards Blake Cottages



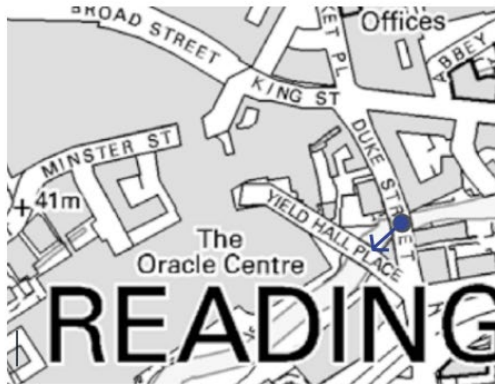
Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

The change to view is the development at 80-82 Kings Road, which is now visible in the background. This does not change the composition of the view and there remains a stepping down in scale towards the low-rise terraces of Blake's Cottages. It continues to have a medium sensitivity to the introduction of tall buildings.

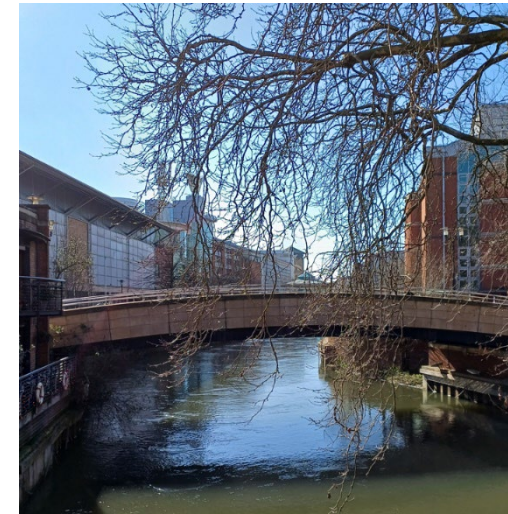
Viewpoint I



Viewpoint I: view along the Kennet and Avon Canal from Duke Street westwards



Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

This view remains virtually identical to the view in the 2008 TBS and tree growth in the foreground obscures some of the view of the skyline. No tall buildings are currently visible. It continues to have a medium sensitivity to the introduction of tall buildings.

Viewpoint J

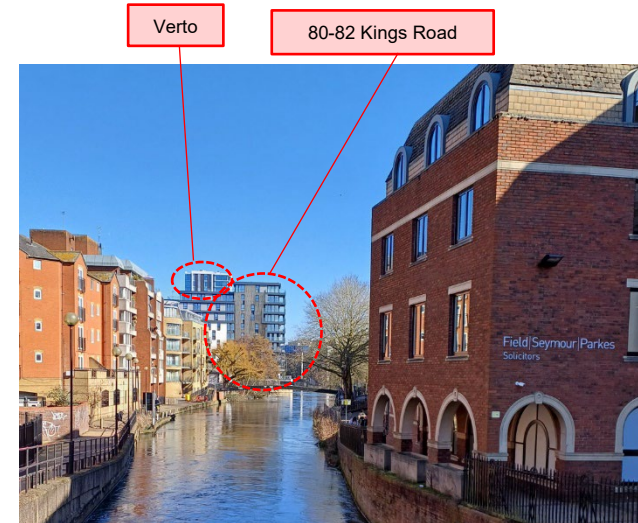


Viewpoint J: view along the Kennet and Avon Canal from Duke Street eastwards



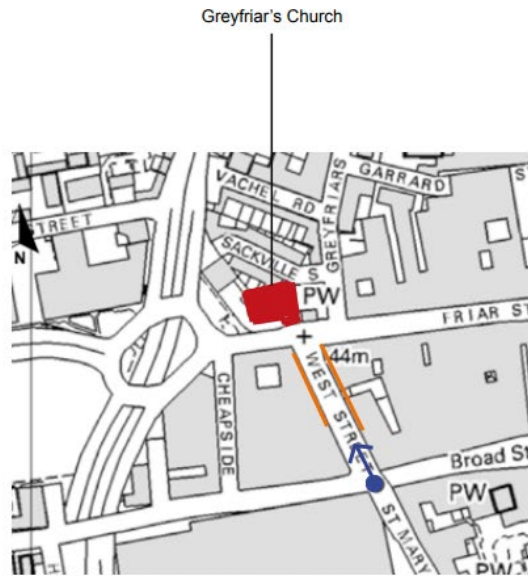
Original view from 2008 TBS

This view remains the same in the foreground but the terminus to the view is now created by further taller buildings of 80-82 Kings Road and the tip of Verto, 120 Kings Road (formerly the site of Kings Point) rising up behind it, which are prominent in the view. Although the canal forms a localised open view, as within the original TBS, the overall view is framed by tall blocky structures and there would be low sensitivity to the introduction of tall buildings.



Updated view March 2025

Viewpoint K



Viewpoint K: view along West Street to Greyfriars Church



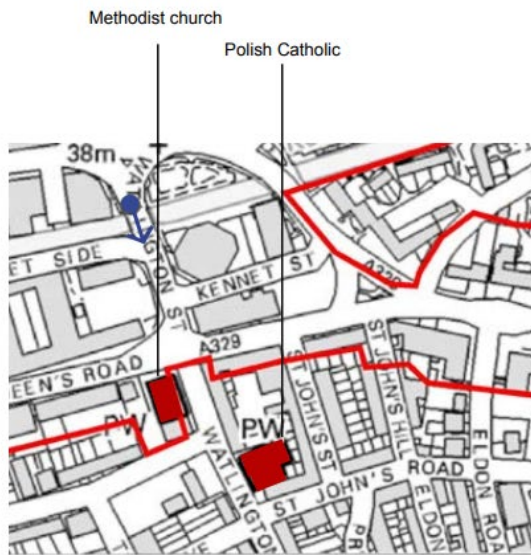
Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

There are no significant changes to this view. Greyfriars Church remains the focus of the view and there continues to be a high sensitivity to tall buildings.

Viewpoint L



Viewpoint L: view along Wallington Street to the twin spires of St. John's and the Methodist Church

Original view from 2008 TBS

Updated view March 2025

The main change to this view is the 10-storey Q2 building on the lefthand side. Just to the right of this view is the redevelopment of the King's Point site (Verto at 120 Kings Road), which now brings built form closer to the highway edge and is much taller. Q2, to the left edge of the view is taller in the view than the two church spires and affects the historic character of the view. However, the views had already been degraded by the presence of the wide road, large office blocks and signage. The features of the church spires and the surrounding conservation area means that the view continues to have medium sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings.

Viewpoint M



Viewpoint M: view eastwards along Castle Street



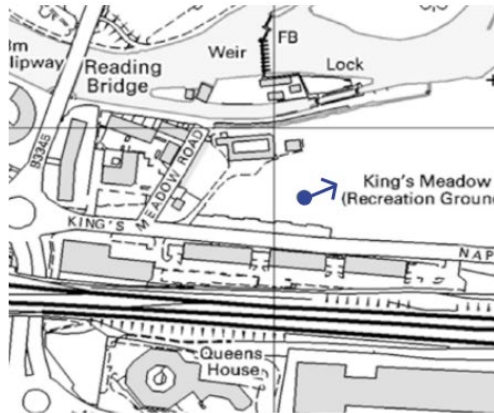
Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

The foreground, featuring a key part of the St. Mary's and Castle Street Conservation Area, has not been altered since the 2008 TBS. However, part of the top of The Blade is now visible in the background and although this an uncharacteristic element of the view it is not a dominating feature, and the view continues to have a high sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings.

Viewpoint N



Viewpoint N: view north westwards across Kings Meadow



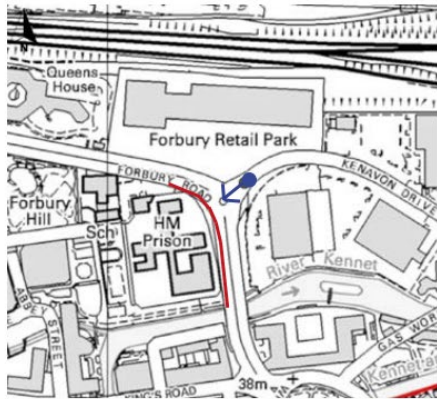
Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

The view remains virtually identical to the original TBS view. No tall buildings are currently visible. Any tall buildings above the wooded skyline would result in a significant change to the character. It continues to have a high sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings.

Viewpoint O



Viewpoint O: View from Kenavon Drive towards Reading Prison



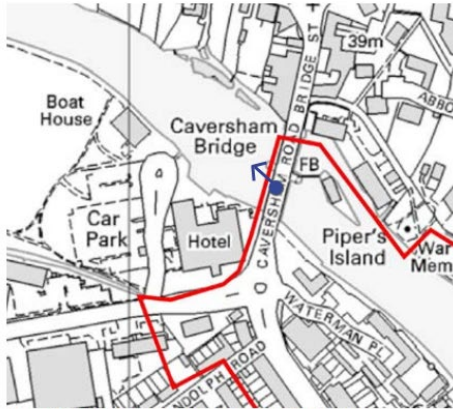
Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

The top floors and spire of The Blade are now prominent features within this view directly behind the prison and provide a competing focus to the prison and reduces the open skyline as referred to within the original TBS. However, the red brick and overall mass of the prison means that it is still the most prominent feature within the view and there is still a medium sensitivity to tall buildings.

Viewpoint P



Viewpoint P: View westwards from Caversham Bridge



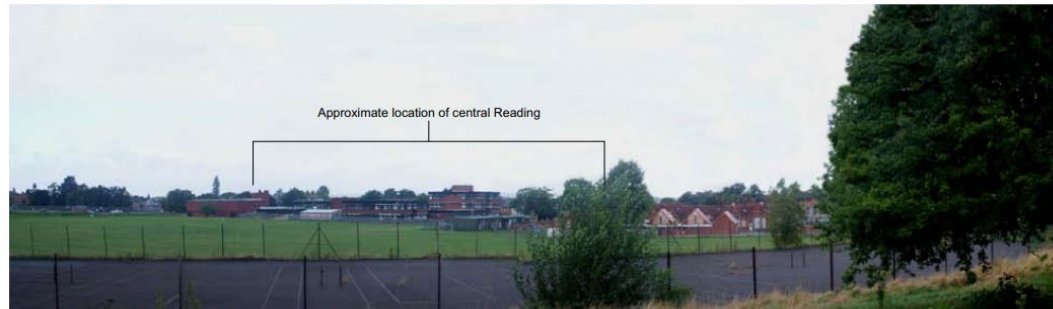
Original view from 2008 TBS

This view remains virtually identical to the view shown in the original TBS. No tall buildings are currently visible. This part of the Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature continues to have a high sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings.



Updated view March 2025

Viewpoint 1



Viewpoint 1: From Green Road, south west of central Reading overlooking playing fields

Original view form 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

The view has significantly changed with the development of Regis Park Road. Panoramic views across the playing fields as shown in the original TBS are no longer possible from Green Road. Views past the buildings include Verto in the background and nearer in view are the new educational buildings of Maiden Erlegh School and the University Technical College (UTC) on Crescent Road. As a result of these changes, it is considered that the sensitivity to tall buildings in central Reading has changed from medium to low, as was identified within the 2018 Update Note⁴.

⁴ Reading Tall Building Strategy Update Note 2018 – March 2018

Viewpoint 2



Viewpoint 2: From the A329, south west of central Reading

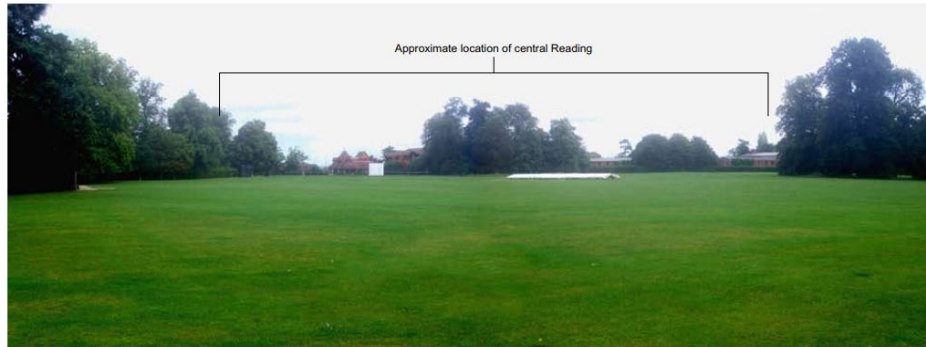
Original view from 2008 TBS

There are a few taller buildings within the background, which would be visible just a short distance north-west of this view, including The Blade and Verto. They are noticeable as uncharacteristic features against the scale of the foreground. There continues to be a medium sensitivity within this view to tall buildings in central Reading.



Updated view March 2025

Viewpoint 3



Viewpoint 3: From the ground of the University of Reading, Whiteknights Campus

Original view from 2008 TBS

The foreground now includes a halls of residence, which is taller than the buildings as seen within the original TBS view and has increased the density. This has reduced the sensitivity to tall buildings from high to medium as set out in the 2018 Update.



Updated view March 2025

Viewpoint 4



Viewpoint 4: From the Mount towards Caversham Park

Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

There are no significant changes to this view. No tall buildings are visible and there continues to be a high sensitivity to tall buildings.

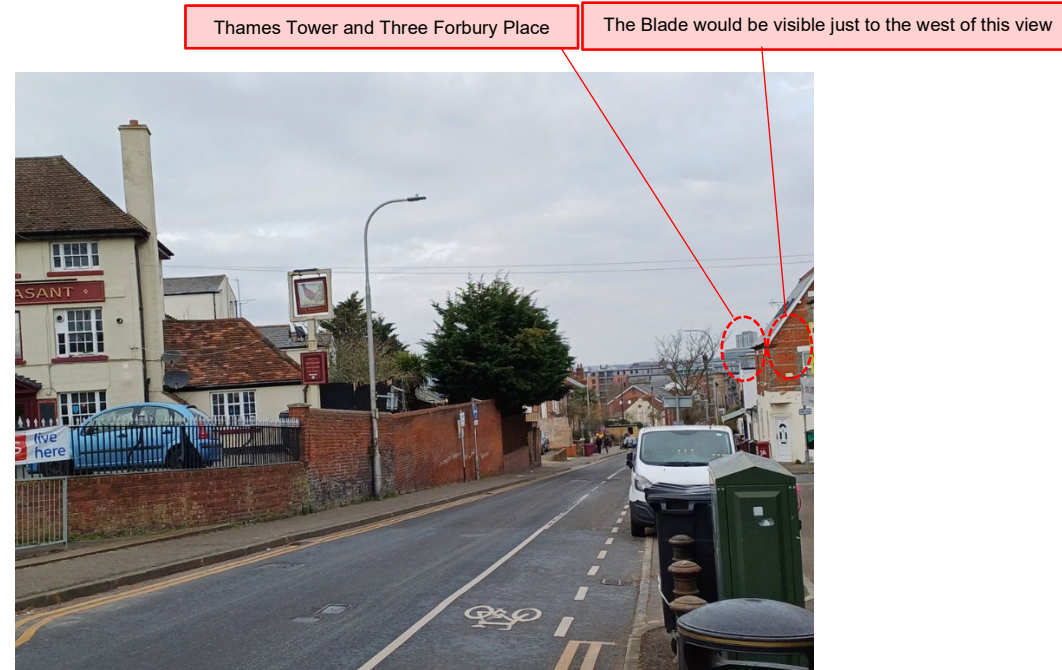
Viewpoint 5



Viewpoint 5: From the A327, south of central Reading

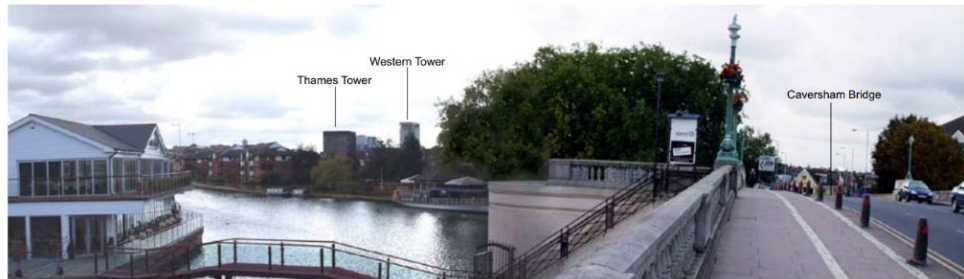
Original view from 2008 TBS

The background has changed with the prominent tall buildings of Thames Quarter and Three Forbury Place. By moving to the west slightly The Blade comes into view. Although not tall buildings there is the additional higher development of Crown House forming the middle of the view. These tall buildings now create further definition to the focal point that buildings in the centre create, as identified within the original TBS, and there continues to be a low sensitivity to tall buildings.



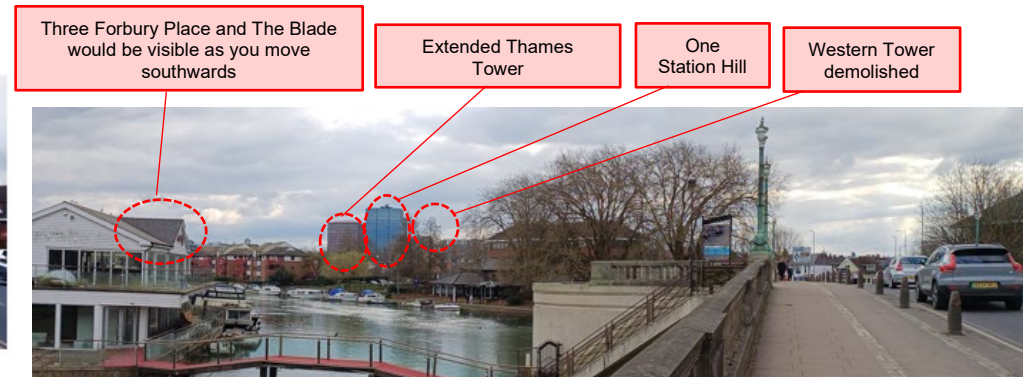
Updated view March 2025

Viewpoint 6



Viewpoint 6: From Caversham Bridge

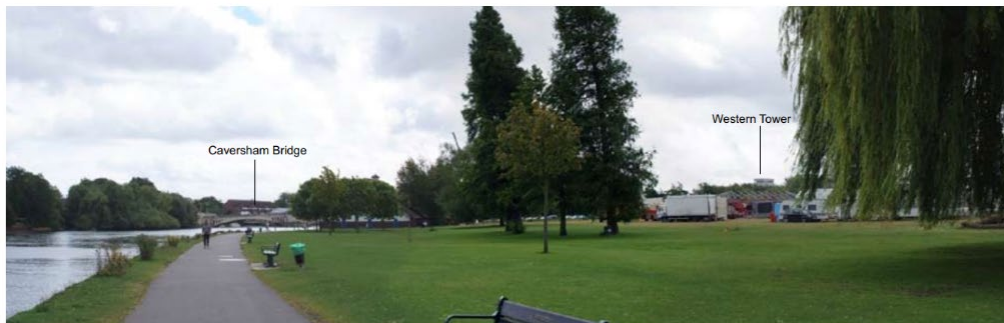
Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

The largely low-rise foreground of the view remains unchanged, but the tall buildings in the background have had some significant alterations. Western Tower has been demolished, but One Station Hill tower and other parts of Station Hill development have intensified the built form adjacent to Thames Tower. Walking across the bridge, a short distance south of the image, and The Blade, Thames Quarter and Three Forbury Place are very visible in the view. The original analysis of the view noted the opportunity for tall buildings to add character and focus, and this is what the tall buildings are starting to do. There continues to be a medium/low sensitivity to tall buildings.

Viewpoint 7



Viewpoint 7: From the Thames Path west of Reading

Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

Previously, the only tall building visible from this view was Western Tower. This has now been demolished, but One Station Hill, the adjacent Thames Tower, and other parts of Station Hill are brought into view alongside intensifying the density of development. There have been no other significant changes to the foreground and overall context of the view, and there, therefore, continues to be a high sensitivity to tall buildings.

Viewpoint 8



Viewpoint 8: From rural road north of Maple Durham

Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

No significant change to features in background or foreground. No tall buildings visible in view. There continues to be a high sensitivity to tall buildings.

Viewpoint 9



Viewpoint 9: From footpath east of Maple Durham

Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

No significant change to features in background or foreground. No tall buildings visible in view. There continues to be a high sensitivity to tall buildings.

Viewpoint 10



Viewpoint 10: From A329 adjacent to Gower Street

Original view from 2008 TBS



Extended and refurbished Queen's Court (former Yell House)

Updated view March 2025

Fountain House remains the focus of the view, but there is an increase to the roof level surrounding it formed by the additional storeys to the right (Queens's Court – student housing). There is no change to the built form in the foreground. There continues to be a low sensitivity to tall buildings.

Viewpoint 11



Viewpoint 11: From Dunsden way, south of Dunsden Green

Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

Tall buildings are visible in the distance. Verto (former King's Point), The Blade, Thames Quarter, One Station Hill and Chatham Place, are distinguishable. There is, however, a strong rural character still, as the buildings are not significantly above the treeline across the fields. Significantly taller buildings would be much more prominent and there continues to be a high sensitivity to tall buildings.

Viewpoint 12



Viewpoint 12: From Hurst Road, east of Reading

Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

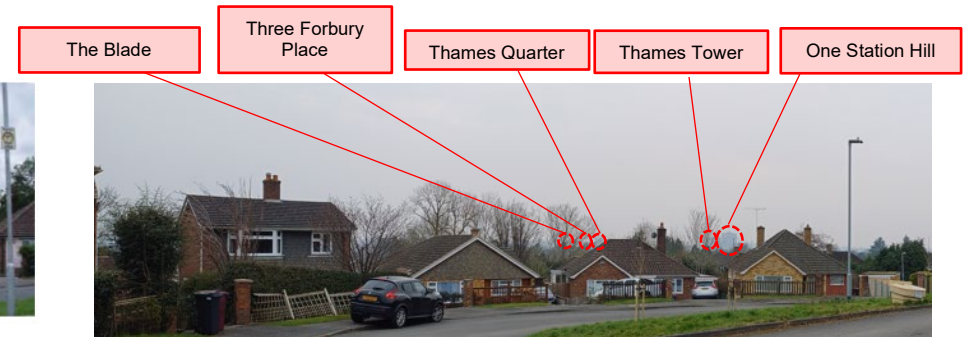
No significant change to this view. It continues to have a high sensitivity to tall buildings.

Viewpoint 13



Viewpoint 13: From 'The Horse Close', Caversham

Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

There are changes to tall buildings within this view. The new buildings of the Blade, Three Forbury Place, Thames Quarter, the extended Thames Tower and One Station Hill are all visible. Western Tower has now been demolished. Moving slightly east or west would bring Chatham tower and Verto in to view. There continues to be a medium sensitivity to tall buildings.

Viewpoint 14



Viewpoint 14: View from Balmore Park

Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

There are changes to tall buildings within this view. The extended Thames Tower, One Station Hill, Station Hill and Chatham Place are all visible. Moving slightly west of this view would bring The Blade, Three Forbury Place and Thames Quarter into view. Western Tower has now been demolished. The clusters of tall buildings are distinguishable, which emphasises the panoramic nature of the view as highlighted in the original TBS. This is one of the best panoramic views of central Reading and any new tall buildings would be highly visible. There continues to be a high sensitivity to tall buildings from this view whether individually placed or within a group.

Viewpoint 15



Viewpoint 15: From the footbridge over the A329, north of Earley Station

Original view from 2008 TBS

There are no changes to this view and no tall buildings visible. There continues to be a medium sensitivity to tall buildings.



Updated view March 2025

Viewpoint 16



Viewpoint 16: From the B3350 at the bridging point of A329

Original view from 2008 TBS

There are no changes to this view and no tall buildings visible. There continues to be a medium sensitivity to tall buildings.



Updated view March 2025

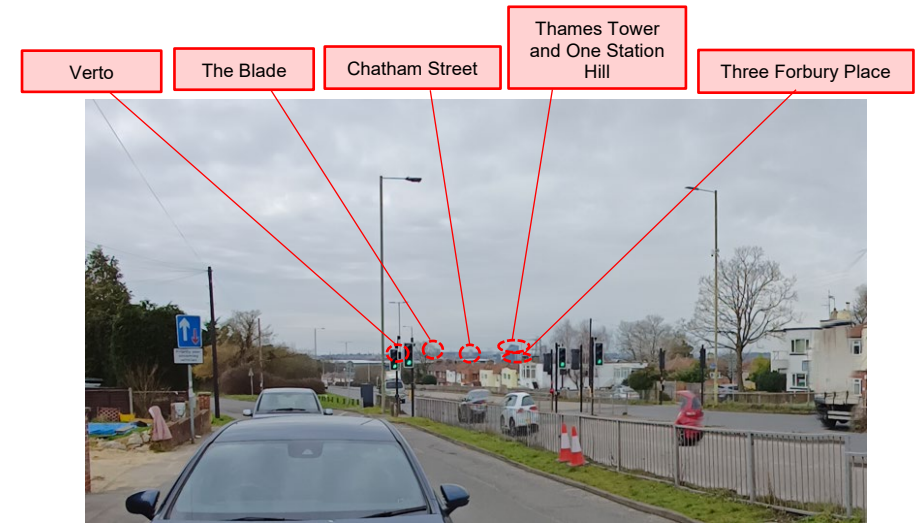
Viewpoint 17



Viewpoint 17: From the A4 west of Reading

Original view from 2008 TBS

There have been no significant changes to the foreground. The tall buildings of Verto, The Blade, Chatham Street, Thames Tower, One Station Hill and Three Forbury Place are all visible in this view. Chatham Place is further in the background. Compared to the 2018 Update the gas holder has been demolished. There continues to be a low sensitivity to tall buildings.



Updated view March 2025

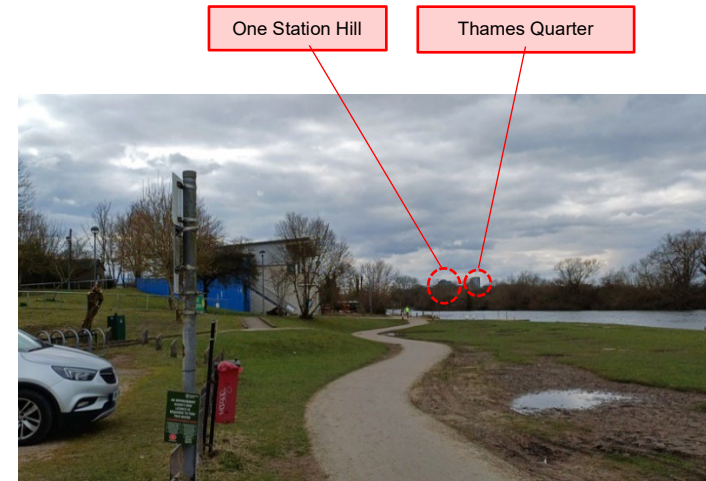
Viewpoint 18



Viewpoint 18: From the Thames Path, east of Reading

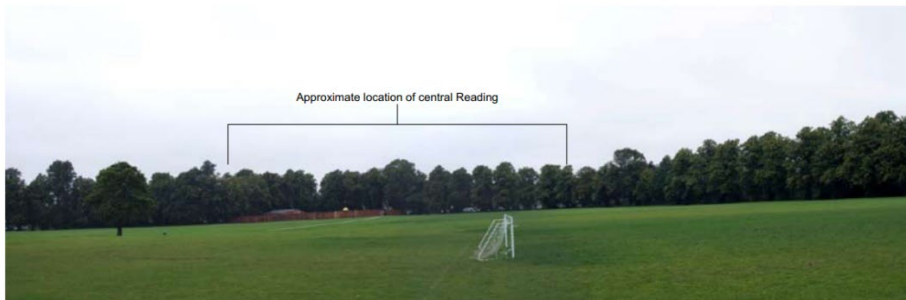
Original view from 2008 TBS

There are a number of tall buildings within the view including One Station Hill and Thames Quarter. The gas holder has now been demolished. However, the River Thames remains the dominant feature in the view and the view continues to have a high sensitivity to tall buildings.



Updated view March 2025

Viewpoint 19



Viewpoint 19: from Palmers Park

Original view from 2008 TBS

The view is largely unchanged. It continues to have a high sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings.



Updated view March 2025

Viewpoint 20



Viewpoint 20: From Herdean Rise, Caversham

Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

Since the 2008 TBS the gas holders have been demolished. The ten storey apartment blocks on Napier Road are still visible above the roofline, but there are no other significant changes to the background or foreground. The view continues to have a medium sensitivity to the inclusion of further tall structures.

Viewpoint 21



Viewpoint 21: From Reading Bridge

Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

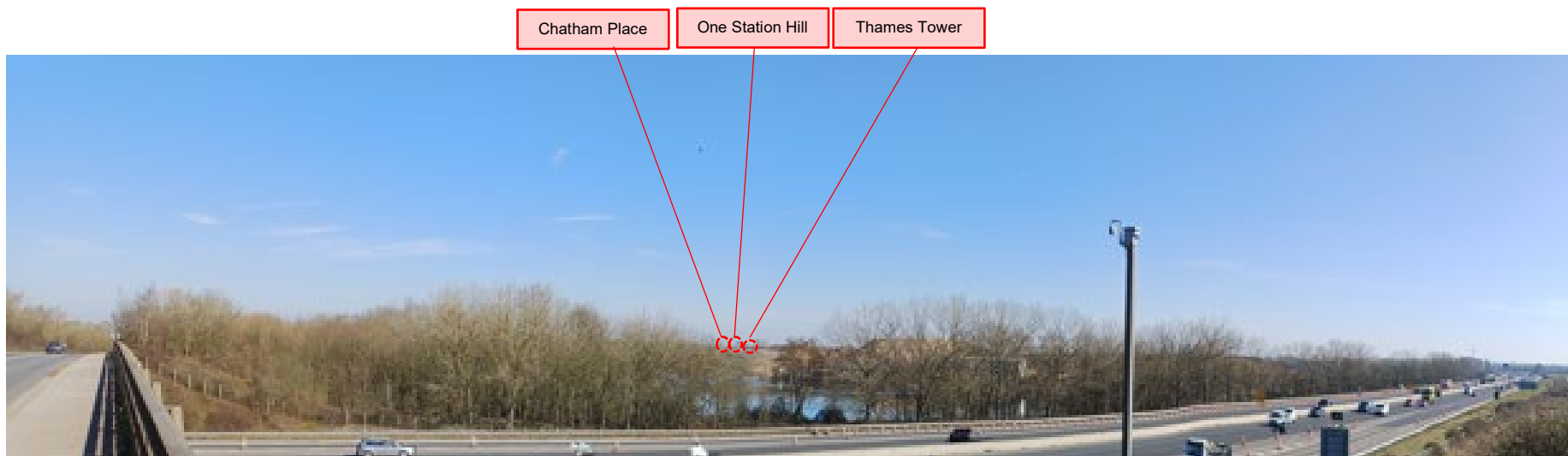
There are a number of changes within the vicinity of this view, but the two large buildings in the foreground mask the tall buildings which exist in the background. The view continues to have a low sensitivity to tall buildings.

Viewpoint 22



Viewpoint 22: From footbridge over the M4

Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

In the foreground, as referred to in the 2018 update, there are active gravel workings, which may have been present in 2008. There are some tall buildings in the background including One Station Hill, Chatham Place and Thames Tower. Depending on the time of year the Blade would be visible right of the centre of the view. The view is now considered to have medium sensitivity to tall buildings as was set out within the 2018 update.

Viewpoint 23



Viewpoint 23: From the A4155, adjacent to Coley Hill

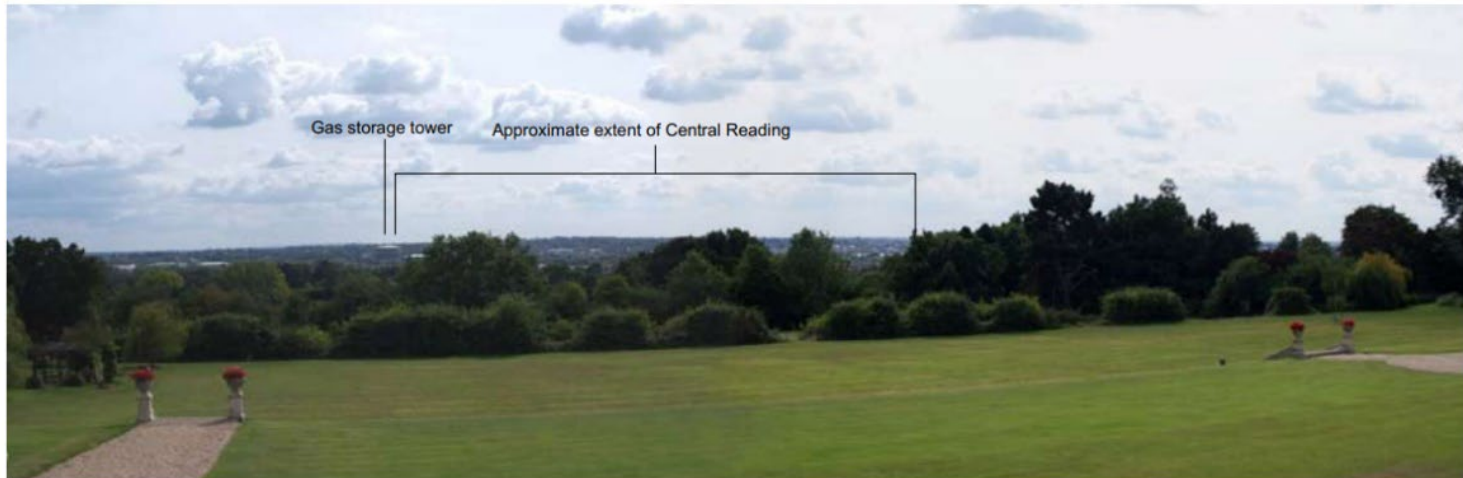
Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

The gas storage tower has now been demolished and the tall building in the background is Verto, on the site of the former Kings Point. The remainder of the view is largely unchanged and there continues to be a low sensitivity to tall buildings.

Viewpoint 24



Viewpoint 24: From Caversham Park

Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view from 2024 – photo from Caversham Park Landscape and Visual Assessment (prepared by Savills March 2024) submitted with application PL/22/0409

This is private property so no access was possible. The updated photo is from March 2024, although not exactly the same view. This is a similar view to that from Horse Close, but the context is more rural. The gas storage tower has now been demolished and the Western Tower, and although The Blade, Chatham Place, Three Forbury Place, Verto, the extended Thames Tower and One Station Hill would be visible from this viewpoint (on a clear day) there continues to be a high sensitivity to tall buildings.

Viewpoint 25



Viewpoint 25; From bridge over the Kennet and Avon canal, east of the A33

Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

The view is now largely obscured by the trees and shrubs in the foreground. It is no longer possible to view developments in Central Reading from this viewpoint. There continues to be a low sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings.

Viewpoint 26



Viewpoint 26: View along the A33, towards Reading

Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

The view continues to be dominated by the A33. Western Tower has now been demolished and the increased height of Thames Tower and One Station Hill are distinctive features on the skyline. There are no notable townscape features and there continues to be a low sensitivity to tall buildings.

Viewpoint 27



Viewpoint 27: View from Coley Place towards central Reading

Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

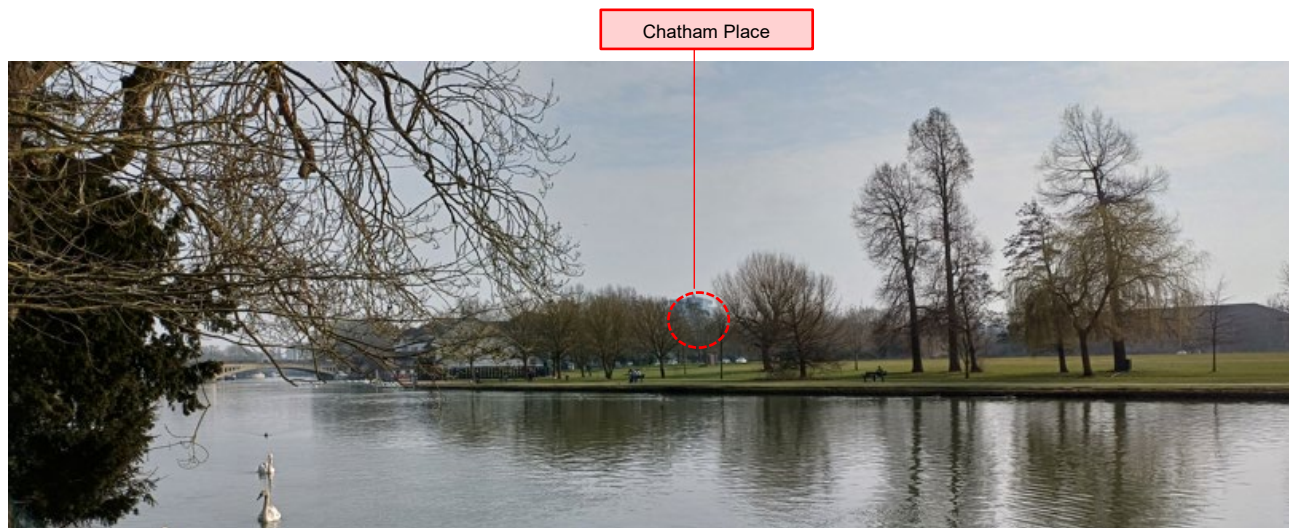
From this close range, elevated position, panoramic views across south west Reading are possible. Views across the residential land use in the foreground are to a developed skyline. St. Giles Church spire and the roof of the Oracle are distinctive skyline features. Verto is visible in the centre of the view. The view has a medium sensitivity to the addition of a tall structure. The roofline is currently of variable height and further variety in itself would not have an adverse effect. However, consideration should be given to how specific tall building proposals would respond to the surrounding roofline context. This is particularly true in this instance as a result of the panoramic nature of the view.

Viewpoint 28



Viewpoint 28: View towards Reading and Caversham Bridge from Caversham Gardens

Original view from 2008 TBS



Updated view March 2025

Chatham Place is now visible in the middle of the view, but the tranquil undisturbed character remains and there continues to be a high sensitivity to tall buildings.

Appendix 3: Updates to analysis of character areas

This section takes those character areas where a low or medium sensitivity to tall buildings has been identified and applies further analysis to consider their overall suitability as a location for tall buildings.

Table A3.1: Character area 1: Station Hill

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Low: The large townscape scale and the precedence for tall structures, contribute to this area having a high capacity for the development of further tall buildings in terms of townscape character.	Townscape sensitivity remains low . Planning permissions and implemented schemes have continued to establish this as the primary opportunity for tall buildings.
Historical significance	Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce: post 1840. Any tall building development should be sensitive to the setting of the listed station building and Great western House (now Malmaison).	No change.
Surrounding historical sensitivities	The character area is located approximately 250m away from Forbury Gardens at its nearest point. Tall buildings within the character area e.g. Thames Tower, already form a feature of views from the park, creating a strong identity as a central Reading park. The character area is located approximately 100metres away from the Market Place at the nearest point. Any tall building development should consider the potential impact of tall buildings on views experienced within the Market Place.	No change.
Key views within the character area	No key views have been defined.	A new route has been created through the public realm of Station Hill which gives some enhanced local views from the station at the north and Friar Street at the south, but these are not direct views between the two and would not constitute a new key view.
Key views into the character area	Views of current buildings within the character area are possible from the A4, A327 and A33 when travelling into the city. Buildings within the character area form elements of the view from various points within central Reading, including Forbury Gardens. From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	No change, although Station Hill is increasing the prominence of views into the area.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Tall buildings planning applications	The 2007 application for the Station hill site proposes residential units together with office, retail, arts and leisure uses. The tallest building would range from 150-161 metres.	Thames Tower has been extended upwards and refurbished. There have been a number of iterations of the Station Hill planning permission, and Phases 1 and 2 are now built out or in the latter stages of construction. The remainder of the site (Phase 3) has permission in outline, with the maximum height of Plot C rising to 163m AOD, which would be the tallest building in Reading if built to this height. Section 4 of this report contains more detail.
Market demand	This location is considered prime in terms of the office market due to its proximity to the station and core amenities in the centre.	This is still a prime location. The composition of the centre has an increasing level of residential use alongside offices.
Flood Risk	The area is not covered by either the Zone 3A, 3B or 2 flood risk zones.	The area remains entirely within Flood Zone 1.
Transport	Very good: The area is in the main within 10 minutes walking distance of the train station.	This remains very good and has been further enhanced with the station expansion.
Suitability as a location for tall buildings	High: The large townscape scale and the precedence for tall structures, all contribute to this area having a high capacity for the development of further tall buildings. There is a good level of market demand for the site and it is a sustainable location in terms of transport provisions. As has been noted, any tall building development should seek to mitigate potential visual effects on surrounding sensitive heritage features e.g. the Market Place and Forbury Gardens.	The suitability as a location for tall buildings remains high , subject to appropriate assessment in the context of heritage assets.

Table A3.2: Character area 2: Station Area East

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Low: The high density of development within the character area, the characteristic large block size and the absence of historic townscape features within the area ensures a low sensitivity to the development of further tall buildings. The absence of any key views also contributes to this being an appropriate location when judged against townscape character criteria.	Townscape sensitivity remains low .
Historical significance	Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce: post 1840	No change.
Surrounding historical sensitivities	Forbury Gardens is located immediately to the east of the character area.	No change.
Key views within the character area	No key views have been identified within the character area.	No change.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Key views into the character area	From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	No change.
Tall buildings planning applications	-	3 Forbury Place, an 11-storey office building which was completed in 2010. No more recent applications.
Market demand	This location is considered prime in terms of the office market due to its proximity to the station and core amenities in the centre.	This is still a prime office location with investment into large office buildings at Forbury Place and refurbishment of others.
Flood Risk	The area is not covered by either the Zone 3A, 3B or 2 flood risk zones.	A small area of Flood Zone 2 extends under the railway bridge at Forbury Road and affects the very edge of sites on either side but this has very limited impact on the potential for tall buildings, and the remainder of the area is entirely within Flood Zone 1.
Transport	Good: More than half of the area falls within 10 minutes walking distance of the train station, is relatively close to central Reading and the station area amenities and has relatively good provision and access to public transport. In addition, a future National Cycle Network route is proposed.	The accessibility has been enhanced with the expansion of the Station.
Suitability as a location for tall buildings	<p>High: The high density of development within the character area, the characteristic large block size and the absence of historic townscape features within the area ensures a low sensitivity to the development of further tall buildings. The area performs well in terms of sustainable transport provisions.</p> <p>Although, as has been noted, the character area is located in close proximity to Forbury Gardens, any impacts resulting from the development of tall buildings within this character area would be experienced indirectly by receptors in Forbury gardens. Views of tall buildings within Reading are an existing and characteristic feature of the Gardens.</p>	The suitability as a location for tall buildings remains high , subject to the points made in the original TBS.

Table A3.3: Character area 15: Chatham Place

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Low: The existing built form is large scale and blocky, ensuring that tall buildings would not result in a significant change to the urban grain. The absence of notable townscape features ensures a suitability for redevelopment. However, careful consideration should be given on a case by case basis to how tall buildings would impact upon key views along West Street to Greyfriar's Church and to how they would be viewed from and impact upon views of St. Mary's Church. It is proposed that new building directly abutting St. Mary's Butts should not be tall structures. Any tall buildings should be set back from this road and the Conservation Area.	Townscape sensitivity remains low , reinforced by new permissions and developments. However, the sensitivity of the key views as identified remains as in the original TBS.
Historical significance	Ecclesiastical Town; AD1121-1539 Post-Dissolution Reading; AD 1539-1840 Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840	No change.
Surrounding historical sensitivities	The St Mary's/Castle Hill Conservation Area is located to the south.	78-104 Oxford Road now falls within the extended Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area. This introduces greater historic sensitivity to the area, albeit the character of these buildings has not changed.
Key views within the character area	Along West Street to Greyfriar's Church	No change.
Key views into the character area	Buildings within the character area contribute to the skyline visible from Oxford Road when approaching Reading from the west. From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	The tower at Chatham Street is visible in most panoramic views of central Reading and from many parts of the Centre.
Tall buildings planning applications	-	There is a current application for tall buildings, a part redevelopment of Broad Street Mall (PL/24/0173). This would comprise 4 towers of 30, 26, 19 and 8 storeys. Permission already exists for a similar development in this location that would also result in residential towers, but this is not expected to be implemented.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Market demand	The occupier perception of the area is very poor.	The perception of the area will likely be improving, and this is set to continue with future planned developments and the vision for the Minster Quarter. This is not, however, envisaged as a main location for office development.
Flood Risk	The area is not covered by either the Zone 3A, 3B or 2 flood risk zones.	The area remains entirely within Flood Zone 1.
Transport	Significant infrastructural improvements required: This character area is cut off from the station and city centre and has poor provision of public transport and cycle routes.	This location has good access to public transport with a large number of the buses of the overall bus network passing through this Character Area.
Suitability as a location for tall buildings	High: The existing built form is large scale and blocky, ensuring that tall buildings would not result in a significant change to the urban grain. The absence of notable townscape features ensures a suitability for re-development. However, careful consideration should be given on a case- by- case basis to how tall buildings would impact upon key views along West Street to Greyfriar's Church and to how they would be viewed from, or impact upon views of, St. Mary's Church. It is proposed that new buildings directly abutting St. Mary's Butts should not be tall structures. Any tall buildings should be set back from this road and the Conservation Area	The suitability as a location for tall buildings remains high , subject to appropriate assessment in the context of heritage assets. The current application for tall buildings allows for a stepping up in scale from east to west.

Table A3.4: Character area 16: The Civic Centre

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Low: Due to the large scale of the individual elements of the character area, a tall building would not appear uncharacteristic. A tall building could provide structure and focus to the character area which is currently composed of poor quality, undistinguished buildings which creates a weak townscape character. However, careful consideration should be given to retaining glimpsed views to St. Mary's church and the surrounding Conservation Area and it is essential that the building does not become an intrusive and dominant feature of the skyline of views towards St. Mary's Conservation Area	Townscape sensitivity remains low , although the sensitivity of the key views mentioned remains as described in the original TBS.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Historical significance	Anglo Saxon Foundation: AD 500-1121 Ecclesiastical Town; AD1121-1539 Post-Dissolution Reading: AD 1539-1840 Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840	No change.
Surrounding historical sensitivities	St. Mary's Church in the St. Mary's/Castle Hill Conservation Area is located adjacent to the character area. Castle Street to the south of the area contains numerous Listed Buildings.	No change except that the adjacent Conservation Area has been significantly extended along Oxford Road as well as other additions and renamed Russell Street/Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area (adopted 2020)
Key views within the character area	Views from the Civic Centre to St. Mary's Church and Conservation Area	No change.
Key views into the character area	Buildings within the character area contribute to the skyline visible from Oxford Road when approaching Reading from the west. From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading	No change.
Tall buildings planning applications	-	The Civic Centre is now demolished and this Character area is part of the Minster Quarter Area Outline Development Framework (Dec 2018). Tall buildings are envisaged for this Character Area, but there are no formal planning applications at present.
Market demand	This area could be developed for tall buildings but should be considered as a long term aspiration. Tall buildings would have to be developed following, or alongside significant urban renewal and public realm enhancements.	This is part of the Minster Quarter Outline Development Framework, which envisages significant urban renewal through a mix of uses, including tall buildings, and alongside public realm enhancements. This would also be in the context of the emerging Reading Town Centre Public Realm Strategy (Oct 2024).
Flood Risk	The area is not covered by either the Zone 3A, 3B or 2 flood risk zones.	The area remains entirely within Flood Zone 1.
Transport	Infrastructural improvements required: This character area is within walking distance of the centre and main bus routes but is relatively distant from the railway station and existing cycle routes.	No change. The environmental quality of pedestrian routes through the area requires particular attention. Improvements are identified as part of the Minster Quarter Development Framework.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Suitability as a location for tall buildings	High: Due to the large scale of the individual elements of the character area, a tall building would not appear uncharacteristic. A tall building could provide structure and focus to the character area which is currently composed of poor quality, undistinguished buildings which creates a weak townscape character. However, careful consideration should be given to retaining glimpsed views to St. Mary's church and the surrounding Conservation Area. It is essential that the building does not become an intrusive and dominant feature of the skyline of views towards St. Mary's Conservation area.	The suitability as a location for tall buildings remains high , subject to appropriate assessment in the context of heritage assets.

Table A3.5: Character area 18: The Oracle

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Low: The large block size and existing landmark structures (e.g. spire on the car park) create a high capacity for the development of tall buildings. However, consideration should be given on a case by case basis to how the development would impact on the skyline above St Mary's church and the surrounding Conservation Area.	Townscape sensitivity remains low .
Historical significance	Ecclesiastical Town; AD1121-1539 Post-Dissolution Reading: AD 1539-1840 Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840 Adjacent to the Russel Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area	No change.
Surrounding historical sensitivities	The character area is adjacent to St. Mary's/Castle Street Conservation Area.	Noting that the relevant Conservation Area is St. Mary's Butts/ Castle Street and that it is also adjacent to the Market Place/London Street conservation area.
Key views within the character area	Views along the Kennet and Avon canal eastwards	No change.
Key views into the character area	Buildings within the character area contribute to the skyline visible from Oxford Road when approaching Reading from the west. From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading	No change.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Tall buildings planning applications	-	There are currently two applications which include tall buildings: One for the eastern end of the Oracle up to Yield Hall Place (ref: 22/1916) which includes two main buildings, one of which is a 21 storey building, and one for the area of Vue Cinema up to Yield Hall Place comprising three main buildings two of which are tall buildings (13 and 16 storeys ref: 22/1917). These are currently undetermined.
Market demand	-	There are current tall building applications as above for a mix of uses, comprising largely residential use. This strongly indicates a market for tall building development for residential.
Flood Risk	The area is covered by small pockets of zones 3a and 3b flood risk, and the majority of the area falls within the zone 2 flood risk area.	Although all levels of flood risk are present within the area, the vast majority of the area is now within Flood Zone 1. The areas of higher flood risk are those immediately adjacent to the River Kennet or the Holy Brook.
Transport	Infrastructural improvements required: the area is within walking distance of the centre and main bus routes, signed on-road cycle routes and the National Cycle network traffic free routes, but the majority of the site is relatively distant from the railway station	No significant change, although improvements to National Cycle Network 422 which passes along south of site, have enhanced cycle access
Suitability as a location for tall buildings	Moderate: The large block size and absence of historic features within the site create some capacity for tall buildings. However, consideration should be given to the sensitivity of the adjacent St. Marys Butts and Conservation Area. The area does not perform well in terms of sustainable transport provisions, and there are also significant flood risk considerations	The suitability as a location for tall buildings remains moderate . Although flood risk has improved, as well as sustainable transport to a degree, the sensitivity of the adjacent conservation area continues to be a strong constraint.

Table A3.6: Character area 19: Mallard Row to Fobney Street

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Low: The area is characterised by apartment block buildings which are taller than the average residential built form in Reading. The apartment blocks create a medium sized townscape scale and urban grain. Buildings up to 10 storeys would not appear uncharacteristic in townscape terms. However, should built form taller than 10 storeys be proposed, careful consideration should be given to how the increased scale and density of development would impact upon St. Mary's Butts Conservation Area.	Townscape sensitivity remains low .

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Historical significance	Anglo-Saxon Foundation: AD 50-1121 Ecclesiastical Town; AD1121-1539 Post-Dissolution Reading: AD 1539-1840 Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840 Adjacent to the St. Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area.	No change.
Surrounding historical sensitivities	The St. Mary's/Castle Street Conservation Area is adjacent to the northern boundary of the character area.	No change.
Key views within the character area	No key views within the character area have been defined.	No change.
Key views into the character area	Buildings within the character area contribute to the skyline visible from Oxford Road when approaching Reading from the west. From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	No change.
Tall buildings planning applications	-	None
Market demand	The perception of this area by occupiers is poor.	This area is primarily a residential area. The Council now occupies one of the few office buildings, and there is no indication of an increase in market demand for offices, but demand could exist for a residential tall building.
Flood Risk	The area is covered by small pockets of zones 3a and 3b flood risk, and the majority of the area falls within the zone 2 flood risk area.	Although all levels of flood risk are present within the area, the vast majority of the area is now within Flood Zone 1. The areas of higher flood risk are those immediately adjacent to the River Kennet or the Holy Brook.
Transport	Infrastructural improvements required: the area is within walking distance of the centre and main bus routes, but the majority of the site is relatively distant from the railway station and existing cycle networks.	No significant change, although improvements to National Cycle Network 422 which passes along south of site, have enhanced cycle access.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Suitability as a location for tall buildings	Moderate: The presence of existing tall apartment buildings ensures that buildings of a similar height would not be uncharacteristic. However, should built form taller than 10 storeys be proposed, careful consideration should be given to how the increased scale and density of development would impact upon St. Mary's Butts Conservation Area. The area does not perform well in terms of sustainable transport provisions. The poor market perception also detracts from the suitability of this area for tall buildings.	The suitability as a location for tall buildings remains moderate . Although flood risk has improved, as well as sustainable transport to a degree, the sensitivity of the adjacent conservation area continues to be a strong constraint.

Table A3.7: Character area 21: Forbury South

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Low: The existing large block size and the presence of buildings up to 7 storeys and construction of a building up to 15 storeys ensures that a building of up a similar height would not be uncharacteristic. However, due to proximity to Reading Abbey, careful consideration should be given on a case by case basis to potential visual impacts which may result	Townscape sensitivity remains low but the continued presence of Reading Abbey and other heritage assets requires the continued consideration of visual impacts on a case by case basis.
Historical significance	Ecclesiastical Town; AD 1121-1539 Post-Dissolution Reading: AD 1539-1840 Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840. Blake's cottages are listed structures within the character area	No change.
Surrounding historical sensitivities	The character area is located approximately 150m from Reading Abbey (Scheduled Ancient Monument).	No change. The Abbey Ruins and Gateway are both Grade I listed buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments and now form part of a new historic Quarter called Abbey Quarter. The Abbey reopened in 2018 after almost ten years of closure.
Key views within the character area	View along Wallington Street to the twin spires of St. John's Church and the Methodist Chapel	No change.
Key views into the character area	From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading	The Blade and Verto are now prominent from many viewpoints.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Tall buildings planning applications	Abbey Mill House is a 15 storey building with planning permission. There is an application for a building up to 14 storeys on the site of the existing King's Point building which has been permitted.	Abbey Mill House has now been built out (The Blade) in the form expected at the time of the original TBS. Kings Point has been demolished and replaced with a taller building of 17 storeys (Verto).
Market demand	The site is not located ideally for tall buildings due to the distance from the station. There is some potential for the site as a secondary office location, although it is considered that when Abbey Mill House is developed, it may satisfy the market need for tall buildings without the need for further development	The developments of The Blade and Verto have demonstrated an interest in tall buildings. There has been no interest shown in tall buildings on other sites within the area, but this may indicate lack of suitable sites coming forward rather than a lack of demand. Demand would be more likely to be residential in this location, as the office focus of this area has reduced.
Flood Risk	The majority of the area falls within zone 2 for flood risk. The area closest to the Kennet falls within zone 3a	Although all levels of flood risk are present within the area, the majority of the area is now within Flood Zone 1. The areas of higher flood risk are those immediately adjacent to the River Kennet, Kennet & Avon canal or the Holy Brook.
Transport	Significant infrastructural improvements required: The site has good access to public transport routes that link to the centre and station area but is otherwise poorly situated in terms of alternative and sustainable means of travel. A National Cycle Network traffic free route crosses through the length of the area and a link to the centre signed on road route is proposed for the future.	No significant change to the conclusion (it should be noted that conclusions about poor provision of public transport are compared to other areas of the town centre only, not Reading as a whole).
Suitability as a location for tall buildings	High: Although the area is not currently considered to be optimum in terms of market demand, the development of Abbey Mill House will raise the profile of this part of Reading. The existing large block size and the presence of buildings up to 7 storeys and construction of a building up to 15 storeys ensures that a building of up a similar height would not be uncharacteristic. However, due to proximity to Reading Abbey, careful consideration should be given on a case by case basis to potential visual impacts which may result.	The suitability as a location for tall buildings remains high, subject to the points made in the TBS. However, the existing two tall buildings accord with the conclusions of the original TBS, that this character area could only accommodate two.

Table A3.8: Character area 22: Vastern Road

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Townscape sensitivity to the inclusion of tall buildings	Low: The large block size which exists within the character area and the absence of any key views or visual focal point makes this an appropriate location for tall buildings. However it is proposed that tall structures should not be developed along the north and western boundaries of the character area as these boundaries are shared with small scale residential areas. any proposed built form should respond in terms of height and scale to the residential area. The tallest structures should be located to the south of the character area, adjacent to the railway line. In this area the townscape features are larger scale, and adjacent to large scale features outside of the area e.g. existing station buildings, Thames Tower and Western Tower	Townscape sensitivity remains low . The recent permissions have strongly confirmed this as a location for tall buildings.
Historical significance	Railway town and growth of manufacturing and commerce post 1840.	No change.
Surrounding historical sensitivities	The nearest historical designation is the Market Place Conservation Area which is located approximately 300m to the south.	Identification of a locally listed building at 55 Vastern Road, but this has permission to be demolished as part of a wider redevelopment.
Key views within the character area	No key views have been identified for this area.	The Reading Station Area Framework looked in more depth at key views in the area. This included opportunities to create new lines of sight through the area, from the Christchurch bridge southwards and from the northern station entrance northwards, to assist in the creation of the north-south link. The developments that would deliver the link now have permission on appeal, but a direct line of sight between the river and station would not be achieved.
Key views into the character area	From the elevated position of Caversham Park, Balmore Park and Horse Close, built form within the character area contributes to the view of central Reading.	The Thames Quarter building on the eastern end of the Character area is now visible from many views within Reading.

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Tall buildings planning applications	-	<p>There are a number of new permissions for tall buildings.</p> <p>80 Caversham Road (ref 18/2252) is an outline permission for a mix of uses including residential that could include several tall buildings with a maximum height of 114m AOD.</p> <p>Vastern Court (ref 20/0328) has an outline planning permission granted by the Secretary of State for a mixed use development that would consist of four plots, each of which could deliver tall buildings, with a maximum height of 113 AOD.</p> <p>55 Vastern Road, granted on appeal (ref 23/1673), would not deliver tall buildings but rises to 11 residential storeys at its highest point, and has now been implemented.</p>
Market demand	Currently not considered a major office location although should development around the station be successful in delivering 360 degree accessibility (rather than focusing on the established links to the south of the train line) the location would be sought after by occupiers.	The 360 degree accessibility has been achieved with the northern station entrance and the pedestrian underpass. A number of tall buildings have been granted permission since the original TBS demonstrating a clear market demand for tall buildings. Although the permissions are mixed use, the strongest demand in this location is currently residential.
Flood Risk	The majority of the area falls within the zone 2 flood risk zone.	The majority of the area remains within Flood Zone 2, and the extent of any land within Flood Zone 3 has reduced substantially, albeit that the impacts of climate change under the various scenarios are expected to result in a greater extent of land within Flood Zone 3.
Transport	Infrastructural improvements required: Although this area is close to the railway station, access across the railway is poor and will require improvement to take full advantage of its location. The links to the city centre are also poor but two main bus routes cross the area at either end. A future National Cycle Network traffic free route is proposed that would link the existing National Cycle Network traffic-free route along the river to the station area and city centre from one side of the character area.	This site has benefitted from significant improvements to accessibility, as a result of the new northern station entrance, underpass linking the area to the core of the town centre to the south, the public transport interchange adjacent to the station entrance, and the Christchurch Bridge linking the site to Caversham. Transport accessibility is now very good

Consideration	Original tall building strategy comment	2025 update
Suitability as a location for tall buildings	High: The large block size which exists within the character area and the absence of any key views or visual focal point makes this an appropriate location for tall buildings. There are no key views which could be blocked by development of tall buildings. In order for tall building development within this area to be viable in terms of market considerations, there would need to be associated public realm enhancements and enhanced accessibility to improve market perception of the area.	The suitability as a location for tall buildings remains high, particularly with improvements to transport access, making this one of the most accessible areas in the region. A new station square north also helps to enhance public realm, although redevelopment of adjacent buildings will be needed to fully realise this.