

## COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES  
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 31 May 2017

ITEM NO.10

Ward: Katesgrove

App No.: 170019/FUL

Address: Existing Car Park East Street Reading

Proposal: Erection of 4 storey building to provide 103 student accommodation units (Sui Generis), landscaping, access and ancillary works, following removal of a 49 space car park.

Applicant: **Studios Construction (Reading) Limited**

Date received: 15th February 2017

Major Application 13 week target decision date: Extension agreed to 5th June 2017

### RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE planning permission for the following reasons:

1. The proposed building by reason of its scale, form and dominant massing, use of inappropriate materials and lack of detailing is unsympathetic and would fail to enhance or preserve the character and appearance of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. Furthermore, it would have a detrimental impact on the settings of the rear of listed buildings in London Street and thus harm the significance of those buildings. It is thus contrary to Policies CS7 and CS33 of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy 2008 (Altered 2015), DM4 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (Altered 2015) and to S.66(1) and S.72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
2. The proposal fails to demonstrate in a sequential test that there is an alternative location for such development, which is classified by the Environment Agency as "more vulnerable" and part within Flood Zone 2, and that the potential risks from flooding such as reduced flood water storage, impedance to flow or risks to life and property are acceptable or can be mitigated. It is thus contrary to Policy CS35 of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy 2008 (Altered 2015).
3. The proposed development does not comply with the Local Planning Authority's standards in respect of arrivals and departure procedure at the beginning and end of term and as a result constitutes a highway safety hazard in conflict with Policy CS24 of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy 2008 (Altered 2015) and Policy DM12 of the Reading Borough LDF Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (Altered 2015).
4. The proposed development does not comply with the Local Planning Authority's standards in respect of secure cycle storage provision. In particular, insufficient information has been provided on access to the cycle storage location on Level 0 to ensure that this alternative mode of travel is encouraged. It thus conflicts with the aims of Policies CS23 and CS24 of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy 2008 (Altered 2015) in this regard.
5. In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure an Employment and Skills Plan and use of the living accommodation to be occupied as student accommodation (Sui Generis) only, the proposal will not mitigate its impact on the social and economic infrastructure of the borough, contrary to Policies CS3

and CS9 of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy 2008 (Altered 2015), Policy DM3 of the Reading Borough LDF Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (Altered 2015) and the Council's Adopted Supplementary Planning Documents on Employment, Skills & Training (2013) and Planning Obligations under Section (2015).

6. The loss of trees on site with insufficient opportunity for replacement planting and landscaping visible from the public realm would be unacceptable in this urban setting and detrimental to the long term character of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. It is thus contrary to Policy CS7 of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy 2008 (Altered 2015) and Policy DM18 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (Altered 2015).

Informatives:

1. Plan numbers & documents (as detailed below the conclusion section of this report).
2. The local planning authority has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive way by clearly setting out concerns relating to the proposal.
3. Without prejudice to any future application or appeal, the applicant is advised that reason for refusal 5 could be overcome by entering into a Section 106 legal agreement or unilateral undertaking for a scheme that was in all other respects acceptable.
4. The applicant is advised that the refused scheme, had it been able to be approved, would have been a CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) liable development.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site comprises a landscaped private car park used by nearby office buildings (including New Century Place) at the north end of East Street, sloping gradually down towards Queens Road and entered opposite Bourne-Stevens Close. There are various retaining walls, raised planters, hedges and trees and an electricity sub-station on the site.



- 1.2 The adjoining area is in mixed uses with residential, offices and community buildings. Adjoining to the north is New Century Place, an office development comprising two four storey blocks of the same design fronting on to Queens Road. On the opposite side of East Street is Bourne-Stevens Close, a residential cul-de-sac. To the west is a separate raised level car park accessed by a vehicle ramp and the backs of properties on London Street, including listed buildings Nos. 33, 35 to 39 and 41 London Street.



Site Location

- 1.3 The site lies within easy walking or cycling distance of both the town centre and railway station (10-15 mins.) whilst Reading University's Whiteknights and London Road campuses (10 mins.) are on the same side of the A4. It is just outside of the Reading Central Core boundary and falls just within the eastern edge of the Market

Place/London Street Conservation Area, the boundary of which runs along the centre of East Street. Approximately one fifth of the site, which slopes down by one metre towards the north east corner falls within Flood Zone 2 of the River Kennet

## 2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Permission is sought for the erection of a four storey (plus part basement) privately managed student accommodation building with an L-shaped footprint in two wings (north/south) to provide 103 studio rooms following removal of a redundant 49 space car park and existing trees/planting.
- 2.2 The main entrance would be on the north side opposite New Century Place and there would be a small garden at the rear towards the south-west boundary of the site alongside the separate raised car park. The south wing in East Street would be set back from the road and landscaped with low level planting and new trees.
- 2.3 The ground floor (Level 0) of the building would include the reception office and a residents lounge. There is no vehicle parking whilst an indoor refuse bin area would be located within the north wing and a secure covered cycle store for up to 40 bicycles is to be provided at the southern end of the south wing.
- 2.4 As a result of discussions with officers principally relating to the scale and impact on the surrounding area, the applicant has amended the scheme as follows:
  - increased set back by 3m with planting on East Street frontage;
  - reduction of overall height (by one storey with part of south wing in East Street stepped down further), bulk and massing;
  - break up of East Street elevation with stepped facades and glass Juliet balconies;
  - introduction of vertical column elements within façade to add texture, interest and verticality;
  - precast buff concrete cornice detail to brickwork head and band (Level 1);
  - windows grouped to increase verticality
  - increased roof overhang;
  - rearranged internal layout to incorporate step and relocation of staircase;
  - reduction in overall bed numbers to 103;
- 2.5 The applicant has a proven track record of student accommodation throughout the UK and in support has stated that amongst the benefits are that the proposal would contribute to the Borough's housing requirement and thus relieve pressure for such accommodation on the private rented sector; bring additional expenditure into the town; and by using a vacant office car park for a car-free development thereby reduce traffic movements with positive implications for the environment.
- 2.6 Externally the building would be finished in facing brick with precast concrete cornices; aluminium powder coated windows and doors (double glazed, clear or infill), glass balustrades with opaque panels (coloured inner layer); opaque (double glazed) and translucent glass spandrel panels (laminated) and aluminium powder coated louvres.
- 2.7 The application is being reported to your meeting as a Major Application and Members have undertaken a recommended unaccompanied site visit.

### 3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 162137 Pre-application advice for proposed new purpose built student accommodation (PBSA) (Use Class Sui Generis) comprising up to 139 units across a mix of studios / twodios/ 1 bed apartments and shared communal recreational living facilities, all associated car parking, landscaping, access and ancillary works.
- OBSERVATIONS  
SENT 6.1.2017

### 4. CONSULTATIONS

#### 4.1 Statutory:

##### Environment Agency:

Have commented that the application is covered by EA Flood Risk Standing Advice and therefore they should not be consulted and will not provide a response.

For information have advised that their maps indicate a very small area of Flood Zone 2 affects the site and the applicant should provide a Flood Risk Assessment in order for (RBC) to consider the development. As part of the FRA the applicant should include all relevant flood levels and extents. Also recommend review of RBC Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for any further detail in relation to this area.

#### 4.2 Non-statutory:

##### RBC Historic Buildings Consultant:

Objection - the proposed development would not enhance or preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and is considered to harm the significance of Listed Buildings along London Street contrary to considerations as set out in sections 72(1) and section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and would fail to meet the requirements of the NPPF and RBC Policy CS33.

Additionally, has made the following comments which are summarised here.

*The proposed site is located within the Market Place and London Street Conservation Area. The Market Place/London Street Conservation Area was designated in 1972 and extended in 1982 and the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal document was adopted by Reading Borough Council in 2007.*

*The proposed site is located within Area 1: London Street. London Street has medieval origins and though many of its buildings have a distinctively Georgian, and later, appearance, parts of older structures can be found. There are a few remaining 16th/17th century buildings including Nos. 49-53 London Street (Grade II Listed) which has an 18th century front on an earlier, timber-framed building; and No. 88 London Street which has a jettied first floor to Church Street whilst Nos. 49/51 London Street contains 17th century panelling. Many of the elegant houses which lined either side of the road still survive though altered and no longer in residential use and devoid of their spacious rear gardens*

*and these are the properties which today add grandeur to the street scene.*

*The settings of the main Grade II Listed Buildings potentially affected are: No. 33 (Former Everyman Theatre and former Formerly Primitive Methodist Chapel) now the Great Expectations Hotel; Nos. 35, 37 and 39, 41 and 49-53 London Street; and Queen's Crescent.*

*The character of the Conservation Area is not entirely embodied in the architectural quality of London Street. There are important historic associations and locally characterful historic buildings and spaces which are not picked up in the applicant's Heritage Assessment.*

*The RISC shop (35-39 London Street), has associations with William Penn, who founded Pennsylvania in the USA and as a member of the Friends Society of Reading attended a meeting place at that site. To the rear of 35-39 London Street is a narrow passageway with an outbuilding and former workshops which contribute to the Conservation Area including a three storey 19th century warehouse and includes an adjacent roof top garden used by members of RISC which directly overlooks the proposed development site.*

*The area is also historically associated with Charles Dickens, in the name of the Great Expectations hotel, where he performed a solo reading of "A Christmas Carol" in 1860. The rear of the Great Expectations faces out towards the proposed site.*

*The proposed site is located on land which is lower than the rear of the main Listed Buildings and the land generally slopes away from the south to Queens Road to the north. The proposed site is currently a car park which is considered a neutral space with a large area of hard-standing within the Conservation Area, but provides views and legibility towards the rear elevations of the Listed Buildings along London Street.*

*Around the site are a number of modern buildings including the two New Century Place developments along which front Queen's Road and are 4 storeys high with pitched roofs built of red brick with a concrete blockwork plinth. The Central Point on corner of Queen's Road and London Street a 5 storey high building is also of red brick. Around the site are further developments which are generally 2 to 3 storeys and built of red brick with pitched roofs and bands of buff brickwork.*

*The height of the proposed front elevation onto East Street has the most potential to affect the rear settings of Nos. 33 and 35 to 39 London Street. The latter listed building in particular includes a group of characterful non-designated heritage assets to the rear including a former 19th century warehouse/workshop with adjacent roof terrace overlooking the proposed development.*

*The front elevations of the London Street Listed Buildings are directly connected to the rear of the buildings by historic alley ways which means that this space is linked and has an effect on their appreciation and significance as heritage assets. As stated in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking (Historic England, 2016) back elevations can be important, as can side views from alleys and yards.*

*In relation to the Conservation Area, the addition of a building of such large scale and mass on this site would reduce the appreciation of the rear elevations of the Listed Buildings and unlisted buildings of historic interest and would not meet the*

*requirement to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area in replacing the neutral presence of the existing car park.*

*The local authority has a statutory duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses under Section 66(1) and 'with respect of any building or other land in a conservation area.....special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area under Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area Act) 1990. In addition there is an overriding statutory requirement specified in the Act under Section 66(1) which states that 'in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority.....shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting.....'.*

*The proposed architectural form of the proposed design consisting of a 5 storey building with a flat roof is considered to be too large in terms of its mass and scale in relation to surrounding historic buildings and spaces in order to achieve the statutory requirement to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The height of the proposed when taken in conjunction with the mass of the proposed building its flat roofed form and its aluminium cladding, would harm the Conservation Area and visually impact the settings of the Listed Buildings to the rear. The proposed building's location directly abutting East Street without any surrounding neutral public space would represent a dominant and oppressive presence in the street scene of the Conservation Area. No design concessions have therefore been made to the address the character of the Conservation Area or the settings of the Listed Buildings.*

*Whilst some of the context for the proposed site is represented by modern four storey offices buildings of indifferent quality, these buildings are confined to ring to the east of East Street (outside the Conservation Area) or along the busy Queens Street main road.*

AMENDED PLANS - further comments as follows:

*Despite the reduction in height of the proposed building, the perceived 'bulkiness' of the building persists and it is considered that it would dominate the street scene particularly along East Street. This bulkiness is partly due to the 'box-like' appearance of the building, which has not been suitably broken-up, and the combination of a flat-roofed form with the scale and mass of the building.*

*In addition the unsympathetic appearance of the proposed building is exacerbated by the use of inappropriate materials such spandrel panels, for which no details are given, and use of basic 'stock' bricks as the dominant materials. These standard, mass-produced materials are not considered appropriate to the special character of the conservation area where high quality, bespoke materials which would enhance its character and appearance are generally to be expected in order to mitigate any potential harm to the area.*

*Whilst the increase in setting-back the front elevation of the proposed building, away from East Street, from c.0.5m to c.3m, is welcomed, this has resulted in the encroachment of the building further towards the rear elevations of the Listed Buildings on London Street. The importance of the rear settings of the Listed Buildings along London Street, and the spaces between them, has been highlighted in previous consultation letters.*

*The amendments to the design have not adequately addressed concerns with the proposed development which is considered to be too bulky, dominant and unsympathetic to settings of the surrounding historic buildings and character and appearance of the conservation area. The bulk of the proposed building when taken in conjunction with the flat roofed form and the proposed external materials would harm the conservation area and the significance of the Listed Buildings and would not preserve their settings.*

RBC Natural Environment (Trees/Landscape):

Objection for the following reasons:

*The survey has identified 5 trees and one group of trees on or adjacent to the development site. The trees are highly visible from East Street and selective individuals are visible in wider views from Queens Road. All trees have been identified as category 'C' trees. Having viewed the trees on site I agree that most are category C although trees T1 & T4 would possibly be a B/C as they are reasonable specimens though small and are of moderate quality with an estimated life expectancy of at least 20 years.*

*Although category 'C' trees should be a material consideration on the design process, individually they would not usually be a constraint on the reasonable development of a site and there is the possibility that the Council would agree to the removal of trees within the site provided substantial new, high amenity planting can be achieved to mitigate their loss. The critical matter for this site is the proposed removal of all visibly prominent trees with no opportunity for new or enhanced landscape planting visible from the public realm. Allowing a new multi-storey building which abuts the adopted highway (apart from a narrow landscape strip) following the removal of the few trees on site and with no opportunity for replacement planting would be unacceptable in this urban setting and detrimental to the long term character of the Conservation Area.*

*I understand that private amenity space is proposed to the rear of the property however this will be small and well shaded. Any trees and landscaping in this space would be obscured and do very little to enhance the amenity of the wider area. Trees planted in the private garden space will create excessive shade and would soon be heavily pruned or removed in order to increase light levels and reduce the nuisance of leaf drop and other small scale debris for residents. As I advised in my pre application consultation response, although in principle there are no objections to the redevelopment of the site, an appropriate scheme would look to retain sustainable landscaped beds adjacent to East Street and include quality new tree planting in a prominent location at the front of the site in order to enhance the amenity of East Street and the Conservation Area.*

AMENDED PLANS - further comments requested to be reported in an update at the meeting.

RBC Natural Environment (Ecology):

No comments received.

RBC Transport Strategy:

Objection - The proposed development does not comply with the Local Planning Authority's standards in respect of arrivals and departure procedure at the

beginning and end of term and, as a result, is in conflict with Core Strategy Policy CS24 and Sites and Detailed Policies document Policy DM12.

The proposed development does not comply with the Local Planning Authority's standards in respect of secure cycle storage provision. This is in direct conflict with Core Strategy Policies CS23 and CS24.

In addition makes the following comments:

*The site is located on the periphery of the central core area which lies at the heart of Reading Borough, consisting primarily of retail and commercial office developments with good transport hubs. This area is well served by rail and bus links and also contains the largest proportion of public car parking spaces. The site is within 250m of the Oracle shopping centre and multi-storey car park and within 500m of Broad Street with a range of shops and services. East Street and the surrounding classified road network all have parking restrictions preventing on-street parking.*

*The site is currently in use as a private car park with a total of 49 spaces. These spaces form part of the parking provision associated with the adjacent office buildings at 1 New Century Place. The Council's Parking standards would require a maximum provision of 1 space per 250m<sup>2</sup> for Zone 1 and 1 space per 100m<sup>2</sup> for Zone 2, the site is located on the boundary between the two, this would require a maximum provision of 25 spaces. The retained office building is to be provided with a provision of 6 spaces, however given the sustainable location of the site and the parking constraints surrounding the site I am happy that the loss of parking is deemed acceptable.*

*A Transport Statement has been submitted to accompany the application and I comment on this below:*

*Parking Provision - The site is located in Zone 2, Primary Core Area, of the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD. This zone directly surrounds the Central Core Area and extends to walking distances of 2 kilometres from the centre of Reading. The parking standards set for Halls of Residence located in this zone are 1 space per FTE member of staff and no requirements for students, however, there are no adopted parking standards for student accommodation which are provided "off campus" and operate as independent providers of higher education accommodation. Therefore, an application of this type is likely to be considered on its own merits considering local circumstances including access to public transport provisions and the availability of parking and on-street regulations.*

*The redevelopment proposals will not provide any car parking spaces, for staff or students, reflecting the sustainable location of the site. It is also proposed that students and staff would not be permitted to apply for a parking permit to ensure that there is no detrimental impact on the local on-street parking. This approach complies with policy.*

*In addition, a Management Plan will be put in place with the aim to minimise disruptions to the local area and to avoid unnecessary queues and delays at the Site at the start and end of the academic year. However there appears to be very limited management of the moving in procedure other than providing information regarding restrictions around the development site, the management plan refers to the following:*

- *The arrival date is generally at the individual student's choice, however, the Accommodation Management (as a section of the Application Form) must be notified in advance to ensure that if there are any instances of numerous coincident arrivals or arrivals at inappropriate times, this can be addressed through rearrangement with the students involved well in advance of their arrival.*
- *Details of parking and loading provision in the immediate locality will be provided with comprehensive information on restrictions, length of stay and penalties.*
- *Parking bays localised to the scheme will be suspended for use only for new arrivals to move in on the assigned move in weekend only. Tenants will be told these bays are for unloading only and will be directed to other parking areas.*

*The moving in procedure must be suitably managed to ensure that an excessive number of vehicles does not try to gain access to the site at anyone time. No on site facilities for this operation have been provided and it is solely reliant on the Public Highway. However there are no guarantees that existing restrictions will remain and what take up would be of the pay and display bays in the area. Any proposal should therefore be able to accommodate its own demand on site. It should also be stated that the Highway will not permit the suspension of parking bays for the arrivals and collections of students. An updated Management Plan is therefore required to tighten up the arrivals and collection procedure and ensure that it is contained on the application site.*

*In accordance with the Councils Parking Standards and Design SPD, students should be prohibited from bringing vehicles to the site through a tenancy agreement stating that residents will not be permitted to keep a car in Reading. This must form part of the signed Tenancy Agreements which will run for the entire period of their tenancy. This requirement will need to be part of a Travel Plan.*

*Trip Generation - The proposed development will result in the loss of car parking for the adjacent office and as a result will lead to a reduction in vehicle trips on the network. The principle of the development is therefore acceptable.*

*Given that the principle is accepted that the trips will reduce the trip rate information that has been supplied within the TS has not been reviewed and confirmed as acceptable.*

*Sustainable Travel - A framework Travel Plan has been submitted to encourage safe, healthy and sustainable travel options and this is deemed acceptable. The full travel plan should be submitted 3 months after occupation so that full survey data can be provided of residents.*

*Cycle Parking - In accordance with the Council's Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD, the development would be required to provide 1 cycle parking space per 3 staff and 1 space per 5 students. It is indicated that there will be up to 30 cycle stands provided within the building, which will be double stacked. This has been deemed acceptable in principle.*

*However, the cycle store is not sufficient in depth to accommodate the proposed type of cycle parking. The installation guide for this type of cycle store is that a depth of 4m would be required. In addition the access to the store is inadequate and therefore will not help encourage cycling as an alternative mode.*

*Revised drawings are therefore required to improve the cycle parking infrastructure. This could usually be dealt with by way of a condition but given that this involves the internal layout of the building and access arrangements this*

*must be undertaken as the application stage given the knock on impacts this would have for the building.*

*Access & Servicing - Current service and delivery arrangements will not be affected by the proposed change of land use and will therefore remain unchanged. Drawing 1607-73 SP03 shows the swept path analysis of a large refuse vehicle accessing the Site's curtilage in forward gear from East Street and then reversing into the collection point and driving out in forward gear. The drawing does result in the refuse vehicle having to travel through the pay and display parking bays on the east side of East Street which would not be acceptable if vehicles were parked in the bays. However, servicing of the adjacent buildings would be undertaken from the same location currently and therefore vehicles are currently able to undertake the manoeuvre and there is just an error with the submitted drawing. Given there are no changes to the current restrictions I am happy that this can continue.*

*The existing access into the site will no longer be required for vehicular access, therefore, this should therefore be abandoned and with the footway reinstated to line and level.*

*Please ask the applicants agent to submit suitably amended plans / information to address the above points prior to determining the application.*

AMENDED PLANS - further comments requested to be reported in an update at the meeting.

RBC Waste Minimisation & Recycling Officer:

No comments received.

RBC Emergency Planning Officer:

No comments received.

RBC Environmental Health (Protection & Nuisance):

No objection subject to conditions requiring installation of glazing and ventilation in accordance with the submitted acoustic assessment; an assessment of the potential site contamination plus a remediation scheme and reporting of any unexpected contamination; a scheme for control of noise and dust plus hours of working and no bonfires during the construction and demolition phase with the following comments:

*A noise assessment should be submitted in support of applications for new residential proposed in noisy areas. The noise assessment will be assessed against the recommendations for internal noise levels within dwellings and external noise levels within gardens / balconies in accordance with BS 8233:2014 and WHO guidelines for Community Noise. The report should identify any mitigation measures that are necessary to ensure that the recommended standard is met.*

*Where appropriate, the noise assessment data should also include noise events (LAMax) and the design should aim to prevent noise levels from noise events exceeding 45dB within bedrooms at night. Noise levels above 45dB are linked with sleep disturbance. The noise assessment submitted shows that the recommended standard for internal noise can be met, if the recommendations from the assessment are incorporated into the design. It is recommended that a condition be attached to consent to ensure that the glazing and ventilation recommendations of*

*the noise assessment will be followed, or that alternative but equally or more effective glazing and ventilation will be used.*

*The site is adjacent to a former works and a brewery that have the potential to have caused contaminated land. The developer is responsible for ensuring that development is safe and suitable for use for the intended purpose or can be made so by remedial action.*

*Ideally a 'phase 1' desk study should be submitted with applications for developments on sites with potentially contamination to give an indication as to the likely risks and to determine whether further investigation is necessary. Investigation must be carried out by a suitably qualified person to ensure that the site is suitable for the proposed use or can be made so by remedial action. Recommend conditions are required to ensure that future occupants are not put at undue risk from contamination.*

*Concerns about potential noise, dust and bonfires associated with the construction (and demolition) of the proposed development and possible adverse impact on nearby residents (and businesses). Fires during construction and demolition can impact on air quality and cause harm to residential amenity. Burning of waste on site could be considered to be harmful to the aims of environmental sustainability.*

RBC Sustainability:

No comments received.

Historic England:

Do not wish to offer any comments. Not necessary to be consulted again unless there are material changes to the proposals.

AMENDED PLANS - further comments requested to be reported in an update at the meeting.

Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee:

No representations received.

AMENDED PLANS - comments requested to be reported in an update at the meeting.

Berkshire Archaeology:

*The Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment submitted with the application provides detailed information regarding the known archaeological potential of the area and the previous uses of the proposal site through historic mapping. In summary the report finds that the proposal site, situated off London Street which is medieval in origin, is located within an area of potential for medieval back plot activity such as ditches and pits and post-medieval activity, including the potential for remains related to the Civil War defences. The report also concludes that medieval remains are likely to have been truncated by later developments and are likely to be fragmentary, therefore any archaeological issues can be mitigated via a planning condition.*

*The desk-based assessment provides a good assessment of the archaeological*

*potential. Previous archaeological investigations in the area have shown that there is a good potential for medieval and post-medieval finds and features to survive however the closest archaeological work at East View Place, to the south, did find the archaeological features to be have been truncated. However some of the ditches revealed during these archaeological investigations were recorded as continuing beyond the northern limit of the site and therefore there is the potential that these features may extend into the proposal site.*

*Due to the potential for archaeological remains to be impacted by the proposed development further information from field investigation is required. We would recommend an initial phase of trial trenching prior to development to evaluate the archaeological potential within the site. Depending on the results of the trial trenching further phases of investigation prior to development may be required and adequate time should be allowed for this within the development programme.*

*Recommend that a condition requiring approval of a written scheme of archaeological investigation is attached to any planning permission granted, to mitigate the impact of the development.*

Crime Prevention Design Officer:

No comments received.

Thames Water:

*Sewer records don't indicate any shared drainage within the site, but there may be newly transferred sewers that we haven't yet mapped and aren't aware of. If the site owner finds shared drainage, the sewers may need to be diverted, as we don't allow new builds over public sewers. They will need to submit their pre-development application to us and then discuss any potential diversions with the engineer dealing with their application.*

Reading UK Chamber of Industry & Commerce:

No comments received.

Neighbour Notification:

Properties in London Street, East Street (incl. London Court, East View Place), Bourne-Stevens Close and New Century Place were consulted on 21st February 2017. In addition, conservation area site notice(s) were displayed.

AMENDED PLANS - re-consultations were undertaken with all previous respondents on 15th May 2017 and any additional comments received in further responses will be reported in an update at the meeting. Site notices describing the amended proposals were displayed on 16th May 2017.

In total there have been 5 objections received to the original plans with the following comments and issues raised:

Scale, design & layout:

- height not in keeping (eg. New Century Place is 4 storeys)
- out of scale (5 storeys), proportion, context and character with pattern in East Street
- pedestrian route to Queens Road between 1 & 2 New Century Place would be an oppressive corridor

- overdevelopment (cramming) - loss of trees/vegetation would not benefit landscape or environment

Impacts on conservation area/settings of listed buildings::

- detrimental to character of Conservation Area (does not preserve or enhance)
- affects rear setting of listed buildings (eg. historic alleyways/proximity to rear boundary of Nos. 35-39 London Street (RISC - including roof garden/meeting rooms) and No. 33 London Street (Great Expectations - with rear entrance to bars)

Impact on residential amenities:

- noise/access during construction
- dominant - too close to residential buildings of 2-3 storeys
- loss of light and views (from East View Place)
- potential impact on daylight/sunlight (overshadowing) of London Street properties (mostly 3 storeys or less incl. Bourne Stevens Close, London Court)
- overlooking/loss of privacy (to East View Place); loss of quiet, green open space (which includes RISC roof garden) and safe environment

Traffic, highway & car/cycle parking issues:

- loss of car parking (for New Century Place)

Other issues:

- amenity area could be sited better to separate buildings

## 5. RELEVANT POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in March 2012 - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).
- 5.2 In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Development Framework (LDF) (Core Strategy and Sites and Detailed Policies Document) according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF. The closer the policies in the plan are to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given.
- 5.3 In Paragraph 7, the NPPF defines sustainable development and the social role of the planning system in supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations. In Section 6: Delivering a Wide Choice of High Quality Homes local planning authorities are advised to boost significantly the supply of housing and that applications for such should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 5.4 Accordingly, the National Planning Policy Framework and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

### **Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy 2008 (Altered 2015)**

CS1 Sustainable Construction and Design

CS2 Waste Minimisation

CS4 Accessibility and the intensity of development

CS5 Inclusive Access  
CS7 Design and the Public Realm  
CS9 Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities  
CS20 Implementation of the Reading Transport Strategy  
CS23 Sustainable Travel and Travel Plans  
CS24 Car/Cycle Parking  
CS33 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment  
CS34 Pollution and Water Resources  
CS35 Flooding  
CS36 Biodiversity and Geology  
CS38 Trees, Hedges and Woodland

**Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (Altered 2015)**

SD1 Presumption In Favour Of Sustainable Development  
DM1 Adaptation to Climate Change  
DM3 Infrastructure Planning  
DM4 Safeguarding Amenity  
DM10 Private and Communal Outdoor Space  
DM12 Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters  
DM18 Tree Planting  
DM19 Air Quality  
SA14 Cycle Routes

**Supplementary Planning Guidance**

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)  
Revised SPD Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2015)  
Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2011)  
Employment, Skills and Training SPD (2013)

6. APPRAISAL

6.1 The main issues to be considered are:

- a) Principle of use/location
- b) Design, massing, scale & effect on character of the Conservation Area/settings of listed buildings
- c) Impact on amenities of surrounding residential properties
- d) Transport issues (parking, traffic & access)
- e) Infrastructure (S106, CIL)
- f) Other (landscaping, drainage & flooding)

Principle of use/location

- 6.2 The site is located within a mixed use area with business and community uses adjoining residential development. It is an accessible location on the edge of the town centre with its many facilities, shops and public transport options. Whilst the Council has no current adopted policy relating to the location of student accommodation, the proximity to the main Reading University campuses to the east, whether reached on foot, by bus or bicycle is an advantage.
- 6.3 As has been done with other recent student accommodation schemes in the Borough, the standard approach is to restrict the use of the living accommodation to be occupied as student accommodation (Sui Generis) only, to be secured via a legal agreement rather than a condition. With the reasons for

refusal given elsewhere in this report, this therefore forms an additional reason for refusal.

Design, massing, scale & effect on character of the Conservation Area/impact on settings of listed buildings

- 6.4 Policy CS1 (Sustainable Construction and Design) of the Reading LDF Core Strategy 2008 (Altered 2015) relates to both new buildings and the refurbishment of existing buildings. Proposals are acceptable where the *design of buildings and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care.*
- 6.5 Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy seeks to ensure that development is of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area in which it is located. Among the urban design objectives of the policy are that this should make a positive contribution to the character, continuity and quality of the public realm.
- 6.6 Policy CS33 confirms that historic features and areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including Conservation Areas and their settings, will be protected and where appropriate enhanced. All proposals will be expected to protect and enhance the character and appearance of the area in which they are located.
- 6.7 The proposed student accommodation building would provide a good standard of living accommodation with facilities including the necessary secure entrance from the street in a managed and landscaped setting. An analysis of the visual impact of the new building in the street, its scale, massing, form and detailed appearance is made here.
- 6.8 The proposals have been amended to improve the relationship with the public realm in East Street by setting back the west elevation of the south wing as far as possible with this layout and given the depth and shape of the site. This provides an opportunity for softening the forward bulk of the building when viewed from East Street. However, in appearance and scale the length of the continuous façade presented at street level would appear as a dominant and visually intrusive feature and would create corridor-like views.
- 6.9 In terms of the scale and massing, the scheme constitutes two component wings (north and south) linked in one block. As a result of discussions with officers, the applicant has amended the proposals by deleting one storey to four storeys in height (excl. basement level) with a further step down at its southern end.
- 6.10 The revised maximum height would thus be kept below the eaves level of the New Century Place offices and pays some regard to the generally lower building storey heights of residential development in East Street (which are on slightly higher ground) and Bourne-Stevens Close. There is a notable variety of building types and a wide area of view in the open "square" at the north end of East Street into which the proposed building would thus appear to have been placed regardless of its context. Its flat roof block form occupying an irregular L-shaped site would appear incongruous and whilst in all other design terms may be appropriate for the proposed use, it would thus be unsympathetic to the surroundings.
- 6.11 In particular, the Council's Historic Buildings Consultant has objected to the

potential impacts of the proposals on the Conservation Area and settings of nearby listed buildings. The form and scale of the proposal, its massing and use of inappropriate modern materials makes little attempt to preserve or enhance these heritage assets or the character of the Conservation Area. As such, the proposals are contrary to the Council's adopted policies in these regards and to national planning guidance.

#### Impact on amenities of surrounding residential properties

- 6.12 Policy DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity) states that development will not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties in terms of privacy and overlooking, access to sunlight and daylight, visual dominance and overbearing, noise and disturbance, artificial lighting, crime and safety etc.
- 6.13 A number of concerns have been raised by local residents and occupiers about the potential impacts on daylight and privacy that are not wholly substantiated on site due to the separation distances involved and/or the orientation of any habitable room windows towards the site from East View Place situated to the south or across East Street from Bourne-Stevens Close which faces the site with one blank wall (at 15m) and a set-back return with window (20m). The applicant has provided a daylight assessment which demonstrates that shadow from the building would reach some adjacent buildings but not block any natural daylight.
- 6.14 The loss of any views beyond the application site, other than in terms of the impacts on heritage significance described elsewhere in this report, is not a reason that can be given for refusal when considering residential amenities. The dominant nature of the proposed building, which would effectively fill in the existing street scape on that side of East Street is of concern however. It would undoubtedly result in a detrimental change in how this location and the surrounding environment is perceived and add a greater sense of enclosure by large buildings with insufficient public interface for the majority of residents and as such is contrary to Policy DM4.

#### Transport Issues (Parking, traffic & access)

- 6.15 Policy CS4 (Accessibility and the Intensity of Development) of the Core Strategy relates the scale and density of development to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities with sites assessed in terms of their accessibility to a defined district or local centre. A good level of accessibility is considered to be that within 400m of a defined centre with a good range of facilities and within 400m by pedestrian routes of a bus stop served frequently.
- 6.16 Policy CS20 (Implementation of the Reading Transport Strategy) of the Core Strategy considers the contribution that proposals make to a balanced Transport network whilst Policy CS24 (Car/Cycle Parking) applies the maximum car/cycle parking standards applicable in relation to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities in particular public transport.
- 6.17 Policy DM12 (Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters) considers various implications including the additional trip generation of proposals, which are permitted where there is no detrimental impact on the

functioning of the transport network or to the safety of users including pedestrians and cyclists.

- 6.18 The site in East Street is within walking distance of Reading Central Area and its full range of shops and other facilities served by regular public transport and thus considered accessible. This would suit the nature of the proposed use for students who would generally arrive by car on average once at the beginning of each term.
- 6.19 Since this is a car-free development it is acceptable in this location to have no on-site parking for staff or students but there are other traffic considerations relating to the moving in procedure and potential for disruption to local roads if an excessive number of vehicles arrive at the same time. This is ultimately a management issue and the Council's Transport Strategy Development Control Officer has objected to the insufficient arrangements that have been put forward by the applicant which would not guarantee that the highway was kept available at all times for local residents and businesses.
- 6.20 Similarly, the on-site provision for cycling as an alternative mode of transport is in accordance with the Council's parking standards but there has been no information provided by the applicant as to how the storage location on Level 0 (Ground Floor) would be made accessible and thus encourage its proper use. As neither of these concerns have been satisfactorily resolved at the time of writing this report the proposals are therefore contrary to Policies CS23, CS24 and DM12.

#### Infrastructure

- 6.21 Policy CS9 (Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities) of the Reading Borough Council LDF Core Strategy 2008 (Altered 2015) states that proposals will not be permitted unless the Council is satisfied that infrastructure, services, resources, amenities or other assets lost or impacted upon as a result of the development will be re-provided. This will require planning obligations entered into by agreement to secure the replacement of social infrastructure, services, resources, amenities or other assets.
- 6.22 An employment, skills and training plan (construction phase) would be required to be secured via a S106 legal agreement had planning permission been recommended. In the absence of an acceptable scheme, this forms an additional reason for refusal of the application (as with securing the student use as detailed earlier in the appraisal) and this issue can be clarified by an informative.
- 6.23 Policy DM3 (Infrastructure Planning) of the Reading Borough LDF Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (Altered 2015) confirms that appropriate provision for infrastructure, services, resources and amenities will be made through planning obligations and/or the Community Infrastructure Levy as relevant. A high priority will be given to health provision and where a specific need is identified and justified, to community facilities.
- 6.24 It is considered that the obligations referred to above would comply with the National Planning Policy Framework and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in that they would be necessary, reasonable and related to the development in planning terms. Had the application been supported the scheme would have been liable for CIL payments. An informative to this

effect can be added to the decision and under the CIL regulations such payments would be due on commencement and occupation of the development.

#### Other

- 6.25 Policy CS38 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland) of the Core strategy seeks to protect individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodland from damage or removal. Policy DM18 (Tree Planting) of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document states that provision for new tree planting shall be made within development sites to enhance the character and appearance of the area.
- 6.26 The Council's Natural Environment Officer has raised concerns about the impact of the losing the amenity value of the existing trees without the opportunity for replacement on the site in a visible location. The amended plans appear to have addressed this requirement with a row of trees indicated in a landscaped setting to the front of the west elevation in East Street. Further comments have been requested from the Natural Environment Officer but until these are received there is a conflict with the wider objectives of Policy CS7 which includes landscape as one of the components of its high quality design objectives, and Policy DM18.
- 6.27 Policy CS34 (Pollution and Water Resources) of the Core Strategy states that development will only be permitted where it would not be damaging to the environment through air, land, noise or light pollution whilst ground and surface water quality would be preserved and water, sewerage and waste treatment infrastructure are adequate.
- 6.28 The applicants' FRA and Drainage Strategy concludes that in an urban setting where other measures are limited the most suitable sustainable drainage solution is an underground attenuation tank together with the incorporation of landscaping around the site. This is in addition to permeable paving details which could be made subject to condition(s) on any permission granted.
- 6.29 Under Policy CS35 (Flooding) of the Core Strategy, development in an area identified as being at high risk of flooding or that would reduce the storage capacity of the flood plain, impede the flow of floodwater or increase the risks to life and property will not be permitted. All proposals within zones of medium or high risk identified in the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment are considered.
- 6.30 The guidance issued by the Environment Agency is that any development in Flood Zone 2 or 3 requires a sequential test that compares the site to other available sites to establish which has the lowest risk and that therefore the potential risks from flooding are acceptable or can otherwise be mitigated. As such, the proposal fails to demonstrate that these risks including that to life and property, however infrequently they are likely to occur or peripheral to the site they may seem have been fully taken into account and is thus contrary to Policy CS35.

## Matters Raised in Representation

- 6.31 All matters raised in representations have been considered elsewhere in this report under the relevant headings of the appraisal section.

## 7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposal for a student residence is considered acceptable in principle in terms of its general location in the town with proximity to both the town centre facilities and attractions, public transport and Reading University campus buildings. Furthermore a good standard of student living accommodation would be created with all necessary on-site amenities for the future residents and staff in an accessible location by public transport that is not dependent on parking.
- 7.2 Nonetheless, there are significant concerns with this amended proposal in particular the overall design, form and scale with detrimental impacts on the Conservation Area and listed buildings, whilst transport related issues have not been resolved. In addition, the flood risk implications have not been satisfactorily addressed.
- 7.3 In particular the scale and massing of the proposed student accommodation block would be visually dominant and its form and detailed appearance unsympathetic to the surroundings. The impacts on heritage assets are described in detail elsewhere in this report whilst the effect on the general living environment would be similarly harmful.
- 7.4 The arrangements for student arrivals would have an impact on the highway traffic flows in the immediate vicinity of the site. As put forward these are inadequate to guarantee highway safety, traffic flow and parking for local residents and businesses.
- 7.5 Other aspects of the proposals relating to the cycle storage and in particular how this secured location would be accessed to ensure its beneficial use, and the landscaping details shown on the amended plans may have been resolved before the meeting, and an update will be provided on these.
- 7.6 These issues and concerns expressed in the above appraisal and through consultations have been considered against all other relevant material considerations. Accordingly, for these reasons within the context of national and local planning policies, it is recommended that planning application be refused.

### Plans:

3001 Rev F Location Plan  
3003 Rev B Topographical Survey  
3004 Rev B Existing Site Plan  
3005 Existing Site Sections A, B, C & D  
3007 Rev J Proposed Site Plan  
3009 Rev B Proposed Building Distances  
3010 Rev V Proposed Plan Level 0  
3011 Rev Q Proposed Plan Level 1  
3012 Rev K Proposed Plan Level 2  
3013 Rev P Proposed Plan Level 3  
3016 Rev B Proposed Plan Level Roof  
3020 Rev N Proposed Elevations North & West  
3021 Rev L Proposed Elevations South

3022 Rev B Proposed Elevations North & West COLOURED  
3023 Rev B Proposed Elevations South & East COLOURED  
3024 Rev B Proposed Elevations East & West Hidden Elevations  
3025 Rev C Proposed Streetscape Elevations  
3026 Rev E Proposed Elevations East  
VS052 View from NCP2 Level 3 Existing  
VS053 View from NCP2 Level 3 Proposed  
Received on 10th May 2017

002 Rev B Proposed Courtyard Landscaping Plan  
3008 Rev B Proposed Block Plan  
3017 Rev B Proposed Plan Basement Level  
3030 Rev E Proposed Site Sections A, B, C & D  
3031 Rev B Proposed Building Sections A & B  
3032 Rev B Proposed Building Sections C & D  
VS054 View from NCP2 Level 3 Proposed  
VS055 View from East Street Proposed  
VS060C Footprint setback to East Street  
VS061A Landscape  
VS062A Scale  
VS063A Scale  
VS064C Subservience  
Photomontage methodology and supporting evidence (Realm, May 2017)  
Two Tier Rack Space Requirements  
Received on 11th May 2017

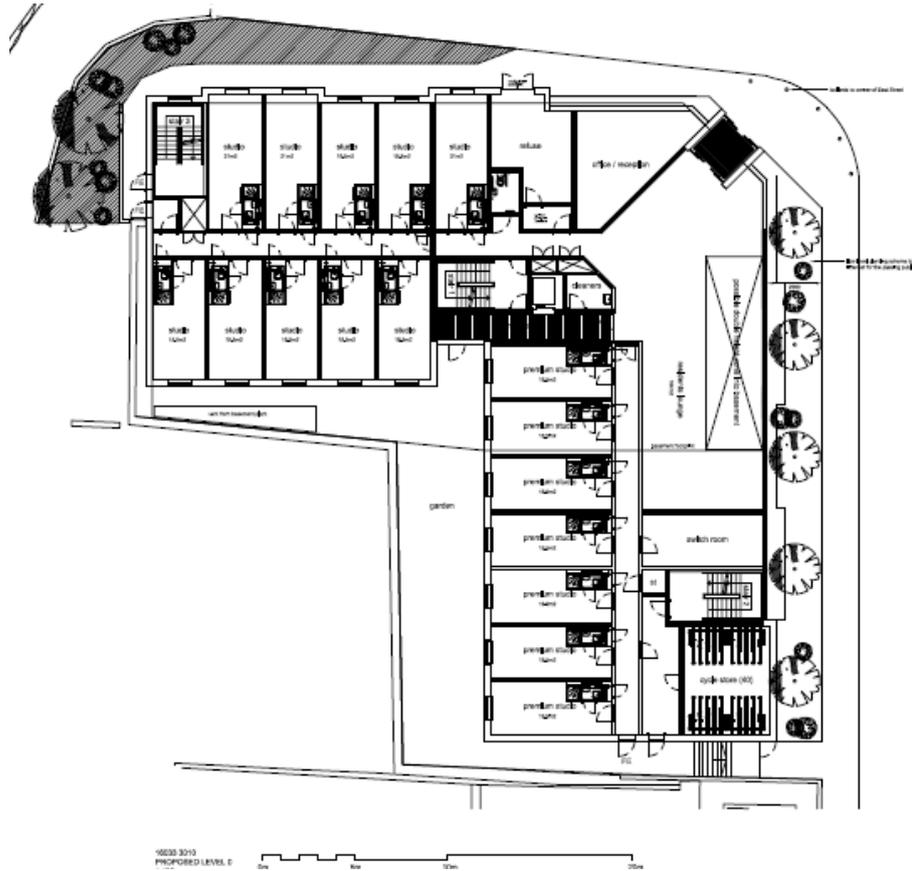
#### Supporting Documents:

Planning Statement (Barton Willmore, January 2017)  
Design & Access Statement (Greenwell Design, January 2017)  
Travel Plan (Transport Planning Associates, December 2016)

Phase 2 Ground Investigation (Clarkebond, December 2016)  
Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy (Clarkebond, September 2016)  
Tree Quality and Constraints Report (ADAS UK Ltd, November 2016)  
Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (Orion Heritage Ltd, November 2016)  
Heritage Assessment (Orion Heritage Ltd, January 2017)  
Residences Management Plan (Collegiate AC)  
New Build and Refurbished Student Accommodation Services Infrastructure Report (Wilson Gray Consulting Ltd, January 2017)  
Daylight Assessment (Wilson Gray Consulting Ltd, December 2016)  
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (ADAS UK Ltd, September 2016)  
Noise Survey and Façade Acoustic Design Strategy (Apex Acoustics Ltd, December 2016)

External Materials Schedule Rev A (Greenwell Design, received on 10th May 2017)  
Landscape Proposal (Rosebank Landscaping) received on 12th May 2017  
Landscape Maintenance & Management Plan (Rosebank Landscaping) received on 12th May 2017

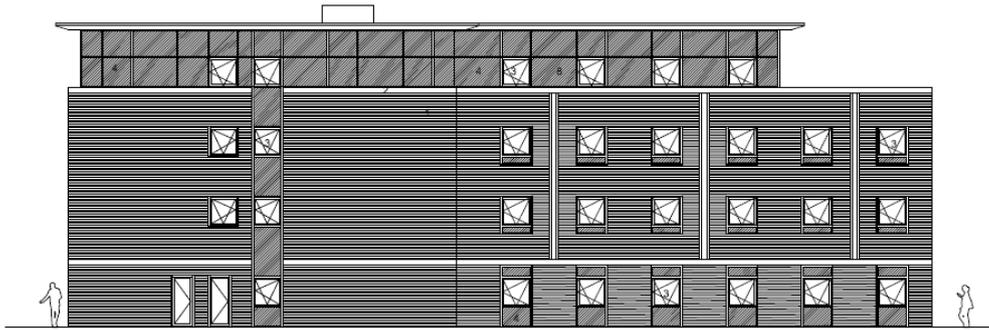
Case Officer: Daniel Murkin



Proposed Level 0 (Ground Floor)



Proposed Landscaping Areas To Site Frontages



16033 3021/01  
 PROPOSED ELEVATION - East Elevation  
 1:100

Proposed East Elevation (from rear of London Street)



16033 3022/01  
 PROPOSED ELEVATION - North Elevation  
 1:100

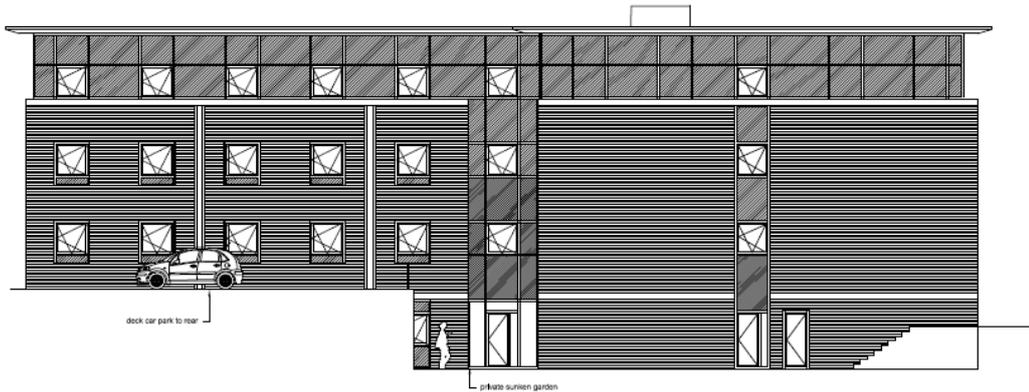
Proposed South Elevation (from New Century Place)



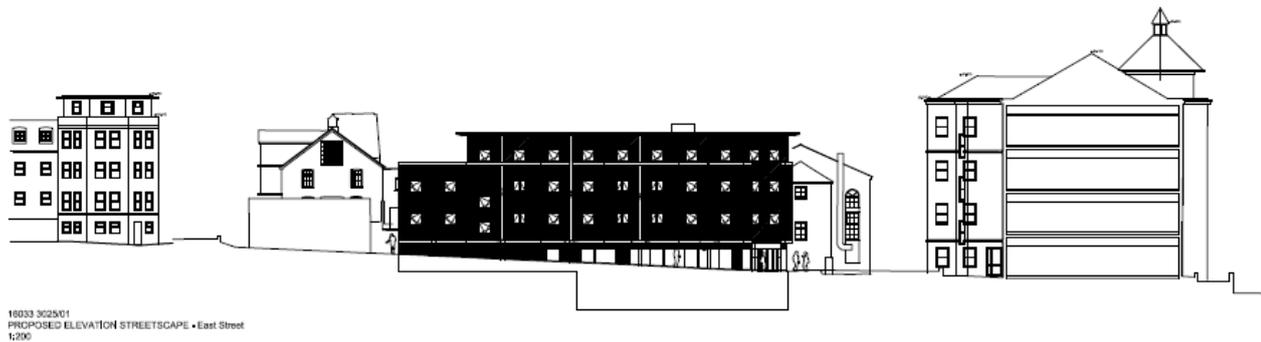
16033 3022/03  
 PROPOSED ELEVATION - West Elevation / East Street  
 1:100

0m 5m 10m 20m

Proposed West Elevation (from East Street)

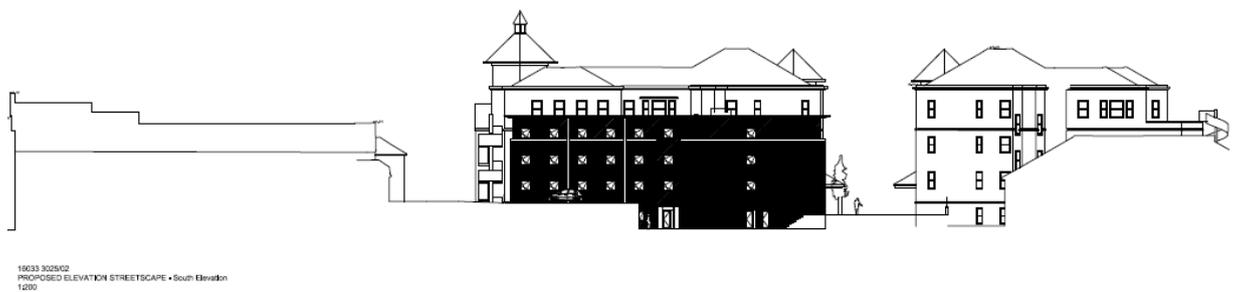


Proposed North Elevation (from London Court/East View Place)



16033 3025/01  
PROPOSED ELEVATION STREETScape • East Street  
1:200

Proposed Streetscape in East Street



16033 3025/02  
PROPOSED ELEVATION STREETScape • South Elevation  
1:200

Proposed Streetscape (from London Court/East View Place)



Proposed building looking SW (from Level 3, New Century Place)