

ONE CASTLE YARD  
RICHMOND, TW10 6TF  
PLANNING STATEMENT  
**PEVERIL SECURITIES LIMITED**  
DECEMBER 2021



TERENCE  
O'ROURKE

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# 1 Introduction

## Purpose

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Terence O'Rourke Ltd on behalf of the applicant, Peveril Securities Limited, in support of a full planning application for the renovation and extension of One Castle Yard, Richmond, TW10 6TF.
- 1.2 Peveril Securities Limited will be working alongside Exton Estates for the proposed works. Exton Estates is a private property company that specialises in commercial renovation and redevelopment. In 2021, Exton Estates were recommended by the Richmond Society for their work on The Court House, Richmond. The renovation of the Court House received the 2021 Richmond Society Award.

## The Planning Application

- 1.3 This planning application is made to Richmond Council. The description of the development proposed is:

*'Internal renovation and reconfiguration of existing building; external alterations including two-storey roof extension with terraces to accommodate additional commercial floorspace (Class E), plant enclosure, remodelled entrance with ramp, associated refuse and cycle storage and public realm improvements'*

## Application Form and Content

- 1.4 This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the plans and documentation submitted as part of the application, which are listed at Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1: Application Submission Contents**

Item	Prepared by
Planning Statement	Terence O'Rourke Ltd
Application form including ownership certificates and notices	Terence O'Rourke Ltd
Design and Access Statement	Dn-a
Existing and Proposed Plans	Dn-a
Heritage Statement	Smith Jenkins
Transport Statement	Markides
Fire Safety Strategy	Dn-a
Construction Management Statement	MPP
Sustainable Drainage Statement	Reuby & Stagg
Community Engagement Report	Forty Shillings
Sustainable Construction Checklist	WPP
BREEAM Pre-assessment	WPP
Energy Report	WPP
Acoustic Assessment	MZA
CIL Additional Information Form	Terence O'Rourke Ltd/ Dn-a
Ecology	Temple Group

## **Structure of this Planning Statement**

1.5 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 provides a description of the application site and surroundings;
- Section 3 describes the development proposed on the site;
- Section 4 outlines the engagement that has informed the application;
- Section 5 sets out the relevant planning policy context;
- Section 6 considers the planning considerations raised by the proposed development;
- Section 7 provides a summary and conclusions on the proposed development.

## 2 Site and Surrounding Area

### Application Site

- 2.1 The site is located within Richmond town centre, in the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames, at the junction of Castle Yard and Lewis Road. It is situated in close proximity to a range of shops and services located along Hill Street and Red Lion Street. The existing building is three storeys in height and in commercial use (Use Class E). The south western part of the site comprises an area of hardstanding in use as car parking and refuse storage which is accessed via a vehicular entrance onto Castle Yard. Located to the rear of the building is the Richmond Hill Health Club and Gym. It is worth noting that the gym is not subject to the proposals in this application.
- 2.2 The site can be considered to be in a highly sustainable location, with easy access to many modes of public transportation. One Castle Yard is positioned within 500 metres of Richmond Train Station which connects the area to central London and beyond via overground and mainline trains. The site is also 40 metres from Richmond Bus Station which offers connections to Kingston, Hounslow and Heathrow Airport.
- 2.3 The existing building is currently in a poor state of disrepair. Internally, the building has an inflexible layout that is ill-suited to the needs and requirements of prospective modern office occupiers. The existing building has a poor track record of environmental performance, with significant issues with energy consumption, insulation, and ventilation. These factors have contributed to a decrease in commercial demand for the space, which in turn has led to the building only achieving 50% occupancy in the last year. Externally, the site requires significant repair, with missing paving, a lack of public realm provisions, and no wheelchair access.
- 2.4 The site is in close proximity to the Grade II listed Odeon Cinema located along Hill Street, Richmond. The cinema is well known for its Art Deco façade and historic internal features. The site also falls within the Central Richmond Conservation Area (17) which is characterised by mainly commercial shopping areas along the High Street with some inner centre residential units.
- 2.5 The building represents a modern addition to the conservation area and is not readily visible within wider townscape views due to the close nature of the surrounding built form.
- 2.6 In addition, the site is located within Flood Risk Zone 1, as indicated on the Environment Agency's Flood Maps.

### Relevant Planning History

- 2.7 The planning history for the site includes the following:
- Ref: 92/0660/FUL (Vertical Swing Radius Road Barrier)
  - Ref: 81/0207/ADV (Advertisement)
  - Ref: 80/1273/ADV (Advertisement)
  - Ref: 77/0993/DD01 (Demolition of existing building and erection of gym)

- Ref: 77/0993 (Demolition of existing building and erection of gym)
- Ref: 76/1015 (Demolition of existing building and erection of gym)
- Ref: 75/1415 (Demolition of existing buildings)

### **Pre-application consultation**

- 2.8 A pre-application meeting was held with Richmond planning officer Andrew Vaughan on site on 1st December, with a virtual follow-up meeting held on 9th December. In summary, the pre-application discussion confirmed that the proposed extension to the existing office building was acceptable in principle due to the site being largely enclosed and in a highly sustainable brownfield location. It was also accepted that there was scope for further intensification of the site in line with the proposed design approach incorporating an additional two storeys.
- 2.9 The associated benefit of the public realm improvements and external improvements to the building (including environmental improvements) was welcomed by the planning officer. Correspondence from the Richmond Society in support of the proposed works was also noted.
- 2.10 In addition to the overall support for the scheme, the officer agreed on a schedule of deliverables and finalised the description of development. It was also confirmed that it was considered unnecessary for this application to submit any tree surveys or trip generation data.

### 3 Development Proposal

- The description of development applied for is:

*'Internal renovation and reconfiguration of existing building; external alterations including two-storey roof extension with terraces to accommodate additional commercial floorspace (Class E), plant enclosure, remodelled entrance with ramp, associated refuse and cycle storage and public realm improvements'*

- In summary, the proposals principally comprise the addition of a two-storey roof extension with external plant within enclosure, material improvements to the external façade of the building, reconfigured front entrance with access ramp to accommodate wheelchair users, and associated refuse and cycle storage.
- To improve the external appearance and environmental performance of the building, several enhancements are proposed to the external façade. This includes the retention of the existing brickwork which will be made good and repainted, addition of a new curtain wall system and new louvred panel to incorporate the new HVAC system. Further detail on these improvements is contained in the accompanying Design and Access Statement.
- In addition, the proposals also include significant improvements to the surrounding public realm. This will comprise new paving and the planting of trees around the perimeter of the building. It is considered that these enhancements will create a more inviting public realm and significantly improve the streetscape along Castle Yard. The proposals also include provision of appropriate refuse and cycle storage facilities to the rear of the building.
- The building is currently not easily accessible for wheelchair users with access only possible via a set of stairs. The applicant is therefore proposing a remodelled entrance with ramp that will provide essential access for wheelchair users to the building, which is not currently the case.
- Internal reconfiguration and renovation of the existing building is also included with the proposed works, however it is noted that these works would not require planning permission *per se*. Their inclusion on the plans is therefore for information purposes. It is highlighted that the current inflexible layout is unattractive for potential occupants, which has contributed to a 50% vacancy rate in the past year. It is therefore the intention to modernise the building in order to accommodate a more flexible internal layout, thereby significantly improving the commercial viability of the building and its overall attractiveness for prospective future occupiers.



## 4 Planning Policy Context

### Introduction

- 4.1 In accordance with the provisions of Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 38(6) of the Planning Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, an application must be considered against the provisions of the adopted Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 According to the London Borough of Richmond online proposals map (adopted July 2015), the site is subject to the following planning designations:
- Central Richmond Conservation Area (DM HD1)
  - Richmond Town Centre Boundary (DM TC1)

In addition, it is noted that the site is located within an Archaeological Priority Area according to Map 1 of DM HD4, although this is being reviewed for the borough by Historic England.

- 4.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 sets out the Government's economic, social and environmental planning policies and is a material consideration. In addition, the National Planning Practice Guidance, Supplementary Planning Guidance and Supplementary Planning Documents and emerging local policy are also capable of being material considerations.
- 4.4 This section of the Planning Statement sets out the national, regional and local planning policy and considerations against which the proposals should be determined.

### Development Plan

- 4.5 In July 2018 Richmond Borough Council adopted the new Local Plan which was designed to replace previous policies in the Core Strategy and Development Management Plan. However, two legal challenges were made regarding the adoption of the Local Plan which required the Council to undertake further consultation. In response to the legal challenges, Richmond Council adopted the changes to into the Local Plan on 3 March 2020. Richmond Council is also currently preparing a new Local Plan, which is expected to be adopted in 2024.

*London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames Local Plan (2018)*

- LP1 (Local Character and Design)
- LP2 (Building Heights)
- LP3 (Designated Heritage Asset)
- LP5 (Views and Vistas)
- LP20 (Climate Change Adaption)
- LP22 (Sustainable Design and Construction)

- LP25 (Development in Centres)
- LP40 (Employment and Local Economy)
- LP41 (Offices)
- LP44 (Sustainable Travel Choices)

## Material Planning Considerations

### *National Planning Policy*

4.6 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was amended on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021. It sets out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 14 advises that this presumption should be seen as the golden thread inherent in both plan-making and decision-taking. In determining planning applications paragraph 14 of the NPPF states that the presumption means:

*“... approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay;”*

4.7 The three dimensions of sustainable development (paragraph 7) are; economic, social and environmental roles –

4.8 *An economic role* - contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure.

4.9 The proposals at One Castle Yard will involve the complete renovation, reconfiguration and extension to the existing and under-used office building. This will ensure that the building remains commercially competitive for years to come and will continue to attract business to Richmond town centre. The proposals reflect aspirations of the new London Plan and national policy to optimise the potential of under-utilised sites in highly sustainable locations

4.10 *A social role* - supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being.

4.11 One Castle Yard is currently inaccessible to wheelchair users, it is part of the proposals to increase accessibility to the space by providing wheelchair access. This will result in a building that is adequately provisioned to meet the needs of the community and of its future occupants. In addition, the improvement and enhancement of the present employment floorspace will further support the vitality of the town centre.

4.12 *An environmental role* - contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use

natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

- 4.13 The proposed renovation of One Castle Yard will contribute to the environmental ambitions of the NPPF. The existing building currently has a poor environmental performance record with significant issues in ventilation, insulation, and energy consumption. The proposed works will significantly improve the environmental performance of the building, and it is the intention of the applicant to achieve an Excellent BREEAM certification. This will improve the status of the building, enticing future occupants.
- 4.14 In addition, the 12 core principles set out within paragraph 17 of the NPPF express that planning should actively manage patterns of growth and focus significant development in locations, which are or can be made sustainable. This will help to promote the use of sustainable transport methods, seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all occupants of land and buildings and encourage the use of previously developed land.
- 4.15 The proposals for the redevelopment of One Castle Yard support the three elements of sustainable development and fully accord with these core national planning policy objectives.

## 5 Planning Assessment

### Principle of Development

- 5.1 The site is located within a designated town centre boundary and has an excellent PTAL rating of 6a. Richmond is categorised as a Main Centre under Local Plan Policy LP25 (Development in Centres). Development in this location under Policy LP25 should seek to optimise *'the potential of sites by contributing towards a suitable mix of uses that enhance the vitality and viability of the centre.'* Additional storeys to accommodate an extension to the existing employment floorspace is therefore considered to be an acceptable and appropriate use in this location.
- 5.2 Policy LP40 of the Richmond Local Plan is concerned with the retention of existing employment land and commercial buildings in order to sustain a strong local economy. The proposals at One Castle Yard follows this policy aspiration by retaining and improving the existing commercial use of the building. The proposals aim to continue to support a diverse and strong local economy by offering high-quality spaces for local businesses in and around Richmond to occupy.
- 5.3 In addition, Policy LP41 (Offices) states that *'any development proposals for new employment or mixed use floorspace should contribute to a net increase in office floorspace where feasible.'* It is considered that the existing building at One Castle Yard is suitable to sustain the proposed upward extension which will accommodate the additional office space. The surrounding site is also deemed acceptable to increased levels of urban intensification.
- 5.4 Paragraph 118 d) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines that planning decisions should *'promote and support the development of underutilised land and buildings.'* An extension to the existing employment floorspace, is therefore considered suitable in this location on this basis.
- 5.5 The principle of further optimisation of the existing office building is also considered to align with London Policy D3 (Optimising site capacity) which outlines that *'higher density developments should generally be promoted in locations that are well connected to jobs, services, infrastructure and amenities by public transport.'* Based on the site's town centre location and its excellent PTAL rating, this is particularly applicable.
- 5.6 In pre-application consultation with the local authority, the principle of extending the existing commercial floorspace in this location was similarly considered appropriate by officers in this setting.

### Heritage

- 5.7 A Heritage Statement was prepared by Smith Jenkins, and the design development of the proposals has been directly informed by the heritage consultant's specialist advice and input.
- 5.8 The principal heritage consideration is the site's location within Central Richmond Conservation Area 17. The nearby Odeon Cinema is also subject to a Grade II Listing. Local Plan Policy LP3 highlights that *'the Council will require development to conserve and, where possible, take opportunities to make a positive contribution to, the historic environment of the borough.'* The site represents a

modern addition to the conservation area, and is considered to have very limited architectural merit. It therefore currently does not make a positive contribution to the appearance or setting of the conservation area. It is further noted that the existing building is not readily visible within townscape views due to the close nature of the surrounding built form.

- 5.9 As highlighted in the Conservation Area Statement, this location is characterised by buildings of varied heights and roof treatment, with numerous modern infill additions (including the proposal site). The proposed roof addition is therefore considered to be both appropriate and in keeping with this varied roofscape form in the surrounding area. Furthermore, the proposals seek to improve the external appearance of the building which has remained largely unchanged since the 1970s, and is considered to detract from views of the building within the conservation area
- 5.10 Due to the location of the proposed roof addition, the proposals are not considered to impact on the setting of the nearby Grade II listed Odeon Cinema building. Furthermore, in appraising the impact on the listed building, it is also noted that the principal heritage value is derived from the Odeon Cinema's front elevation onto Hill Street.
- 5.11 Overall, the present building represents a modern addition to the conservation area, and has remained largely unchanged since the 1970s. The surrounding roofspace is one of a range of roof heights and forms. The proposed roof addition has been carefully designed to reflect the site's conservation area setting, whilst also reflecting the established varied roofscape character. The improvements to the external appearance of the building combined with the wider public realm improvements are also considered to further enhance the building's setting within the conservation area.

### *Design*

- 5.12 A Design and Access statement was prepared by Dn-a Architecture and accompanies this application. The statement confirms that the area surrounding the present building is characterised by a range of building heights with diverse roof level treatments and forms.
- 5.13 The design approach has been informed by a careful consideration of the building's form and surrounding townscape character in accordance with Local Plan Policy LP2 (Building Heights). This outlines that the Council '*will require new buildings, including extensions and redevelopment of existing buildings, to respect and strengthen the setting of the borough's valued townscapes and landscapes, through appropriate building heights.*'
- 5.14 In addition, Policy LP1 (Local Character and Design Quality) outlines that '*development proposals will have to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the site and how it relates to its existing context, including character and appearance, and take opportunities to improve the quality and character of buildings, spaces and the local area.*' As outlined further in the accompanying design document, the design approach has been driven by the vision to improve the quality and appearance of the existing building, and its function within Richmond town centre. This has included a detailed appraisal of character and appearance surrounding the site.

- 5.15 It is further noted that the proposed design and use of materials for the proposed development has been greatly influenced and informed by similar modern developments around the site. This is outlined in more detail in the accompanying design and access statement.
- 5.16 As well as enhancing the appearance of the existing building within the street scene, it is proposed to incorporate additional tree planting and general paving improvements to enhance the quality of the public realm along Castle Yard. The accompanying design document illustrates the existing public realm on the site which is in a poor state of repair and greatly detracts from the appearance of the building and its contribution to the street scene. This includes missing paving, no disabled access and a distinct lack of planting. The proposed public realm improvements are therefore considered a significant benefit of the proposals.

#### *Amenity*

- 5.17 The Design and Access Statement features a Sunlight and Daylight Study as prepared by GIA. The study reviewed the proposed massing of the building and assessed the impacts using VuCity. In response, the design has been stepped back to respect the neighbouring windows at Glovers Lodge which will ensure the minimum amount of transgressions are seen while making optimal use of the development area. The study concludes that the indicative design will not create any unacceptable harm to any of the surrounding properties.

#### *Highways and Parking*

- 5.18 The site is situated in Richmond town centre with an excellent PTAL rating of 6a. It therefore represents a highly sustainable location, close to a range of active travel modes. In addition, the proposed parking area will utilise the existing access off Lewis Road, which currently serves the existing office building.
- 5.19 A transport assessment has been undertaken by Markides Associates and accompanies this application. Policy T2 of the London Plan states that development proposals should demonstrate how they will deliver improvements that support the ten Healthy Streets Indicators in line with Transport for London guidance; reduce the dominance of vehicles whether stationary or moving; and be permeable by foot and cycle and connect to local walking and cycling networks as well as public transport.
- 5.20 The proposals can be considered to be in a highly sustainable location, near to a number of public transportation hubs. In addition, the works will include the provision of an accessible car parking space as well as opportunities to convert 4 car parking spaces for elective vehicles. High-quality cycle provisions will also be provided in accordance with the London Plan cycle parking standards which will be of benefit to future employees.
- 5.21 The transport assessment concludes that the proposed scheme can easily be accommodated within the existing transport network and is therefore not considered to result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or a significant impact upon local transport networks.

#### *Acoustics*

- 5.22 An Acoustics Report was prepared by MZA Acoustics and accompanies this application. The report provides a baseline noise survey which can be used to provide noise levels limits and noise emissions limits from building services, plant, and equipment. The measured survey data from the report has been used to set cumulative plant noise emission limits, which have been determined in accordance with the guidance from the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames' 'Development Control for Noise Generating and Noise Sensitive Development' SPD 2018.

#### *Landscape and Ecology*

- 5.23 The landscaping strategy forms a part of the Design and Access Statement. The site currently hosts a series of on-street trees. It is proposed that the existing street trees will be retained and protected whilst the construction works take place. In addition, the development provides the opportunity to widen the footway around the building in Castle Yard and Lewis Road, allowing the introduction of tree planting, to improve the setting of the building and contribute to the pedestrian experience.
- 5.24 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been undertaken by Temple. The PEA confirms that the majority of the site comprises hard standing and therefore void of any vegetation with no other habitats present on site. The report concludes that the current habitats on-site were suitable for a limited number of protected and noteworthy nesting species but recommends that the site should be enhanced by soft landscaping where feasible.
- 5.25 It is considered that the proposed planting strategy around the building at One Castle Yard will significantly improve opportunities to support species of ecological value. This will be in addition to the visual improvement to the public realm and surrounding streetscape.

#### *Sustainability and BREEAM*

- 5.26 To accompany this application, an Energy Strategy was prepared by Watkins Payne (WPP). This document assesses the proposed energy strategy in line with the energy hierarchy set out in the London Plan. It contains the predicated energy and carbon emission assessment results and identifies savings from the proposed low and zero carbon technologies which will be incorporated into the scheme. The energy and carbon dioxide emission assessment has been undertaken using dynamic simulation modelling software EDSL TAS Version 9.5.1.
- 5.27 The report concludes that the energy strategy for the proposed development will follow a hierarchical approach of using passive and low energy design technologies to reduce the baseline energy demand. The proposed energy strategy will result in a reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> from the building by adopting a highly efficient building envelope solution together with high efficiency mechanical and electrical services incorporating heat recovery.
- 5.28 Regarding the proposed renovation to the existing building, a BREEAM Pre-assessment report was also prepared by WPP. The report concludes that the proposed works at One Castel Yard are expected to achieve an 'Excellent' BREEAM certification once complete. The development is to be fitted out to a fully

fitted standard, therefore a 'Fully Fitted' BREEAM New Construction 2018 assessment is applicable.

- 5.29 The proposed servicing strategy for the building is:
- The office areas will utilise a variable refrigerant flow (HVRF) system for heating and comfort cooling provided on a floor-by-floor basis. The installation will comprise external roof level heat pump units with refrigeration pipework routed to the office floor level VRF units that will be connected to supply air diffusers. Core area heating will consist of electric panel heaters;
  - Domestic hot water will be provided from local electric water heaters on each floor distributed in the core areas;
  - Low Zero Carbon / Renewable energy technologies: Air source heat pumps (ASHP);
  - Lighting will consist of LED lamp sources with daylight dimming and occupancy detection control;
- 5.30 The proposed renovation works at One Castle Yard will result in a significant improvement in the existing building's sustainability performance.

#### *Community Engagement*

- 5.31 A statement of Community Involvement (SCI). was prepared by Forty Shillings to support the proposed development at One Castle Yard. The report details the discussions that have taken place, and the feedback that was received and how this has informed the submitted application. The report concludes that while little feedback was received, what was received was largely positive and this was revived by the project team.
- 5.32 A Public Consultant event was held on 7 December 2021 at the site at One Castle Yard. A series of information boards illustrating the proposed design were showcased to members of the public. The exhibition offered the immediate neighbours the opportunity to see the developing proposals, speak to members of the team and have their questions answered. Feedback forms were also available to provide the opportunity to comment on the proposed.
- 5.33 A meeting was also held with the Richmond Society on 2 November 2021. The society raised various points which were subsequently reviewed by the project team. The Richmond Society followed up the meeting with a letter commending the scheme and providing their support for the redevelopment.
- 5.34 In addition, feedback was provided by the CEO of the Richmond Chamber of Commerce who contacted the project team directly. A call was then facilitated with a representative from Peveril Securities Ltd where the CEO shared her support for the scheme.

#### *Drainage*



- 5.35 The site is in flood zone 1 and not located in a critical drainage area, which was confirmed by the Council in their pre-application advice. Furthermore, it is not greater than 1 hectare in size, and as such a flood risk assessment is not required.
- 5.36 The proposed development consists of constructing additional storeys onto an existing building. It is noted that the area of hardstanding, which will remain largely unchanged. The roof footprint and drainage approach will also be completely unchanged as a result of the development, therefore there is no change to (or impact on) the surface water run-off.
- 5.37 The development is to retain and utilise the existing undisturbed building foundations which have no spare capacity for incorporating the additional weight of a biodiverse roof. The external public space (Castle Mews) is currently an impervious concrete surface with multiple gully's. The proposal is to resurface this area with Sett Pavers, therefore there is no change to (or impact on) the surface water run-off.
- 5.38 A new external staircase and external bin/bike stores will be constructed, these will provide biodiverse roofs designed for at least 50% attenuation of the surface water run off at peak times ( based on existing levels). This therefore does provide some improvement on the existing situation.
- 5.39 Further details can be provided via planning condition, which is considered appropriate in the context of the proposals relating to an existing building (to be retained), and an existing area of hardstanding (similarly to be retained).

#### *Fire Safety*

- 5.40 A Fire Safety Strategy was prepared by Dn-a Architecture and Stroma Building Control in light of Policy D12 of the 2021 London Plan. The report details design criteria and building materials as well as evacuation assembly points. Whilst the proposed development is not considered major, pre-application discussions concluded that the completion of a Fire Safety Strategy was preferred.

## 6 Conclusion

- 6.1 This Planning Statement is submitted in support of the proposed renovation of the existing building at One Castle Yard, two storey roof extension and wider public realm improvements.
- 6.2 Overall, the proposed design approach has been sensitively developed to consider the site's highly sustainable town centre location within Central Richmond Conservation Area, and its proximity to the Odeon Cinema listed building. This has included extensive pre-application consultation with the Council, and the direct input from the heritage consultant into the design development of the proposals. The present office building dates from the 1970s, and its internal configuration, external appearance and environmental performance are all ill-suited to modern office occupiers in this prime central Richmond location, and greatly detracts from the appearance of the streetscene along Castle Yard itself. This is reflected in the significant level of office vacancy of the present building, notwithstanding its prime town centre location.
- 6.3 The proposed development therefore provides the opportunity to enhance, improve and optimise this highly sustainable brownfield site. This aligns with the aspiration of NPPF paragraph 118d) which states that planning decisions should promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings. Similarly, London Plan Policy D3 (Optimising site capacity) highlights the requirement for all development to make the best use of land following a design-led approach that optimises the capacity of sites, with the higher density developments best suited to those locations well connected in terms of jobs and public transport connections.
- 6.4 The applicant team has an established track record within the Borough of delivering high quality schemes, with their most recent Court House scheme being an award winning development. The proposals have been closely informed by extensive pre-application consultation with the local authority, as well as the direct input of specialist consultants, particularly in relation to heritage. Both the Richmond Society and the Richmond Chamber of Commerce have also expressed their support for the proposals. Overall therefore, the proposals deliver sustainable development in this highly accessible town centre location, and are considered to accord with the aims and objectives of both national and local planning policy.