HERITAGE FUSION

CONSERVING THE PAST, INSPIRING THE FUTURE

HERITAGE STATEMENT

The Great Expectations, 33 London St, Reading RG1 4PS

The purpose of this report is to accompany a planning application. A heritage statement sets out the details of the history and development of the asset using photographic, map, archival and fabric evidence. It includes an assessment of the evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value of the heritage asset and the impact of the proposed works upon that significance. In addition to desk based research a site visit was carried out as part of this assessment and a non intrusive survey took place.

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Heritage Asset and its Setting:

Project Address: The Great Expectations, 33 London St, Reading RG1 4PS

Local Authority: Reading Borough Council

Conservation Area: Market Place/London Street

Listing Status: Grade II List entry no. 1113515

Building Use: Hotel and Public House

Scheduled Monument?	N
Listed Building?	Y
Registered Park and Garden	N
Historic Battlefield	N
Locally Listed Heritage Asset	N
Archaeological Notification Area	N
Other non-designated Heritage Asset	N

Project Overview:

External alterations to replace the glazing of the front door transom, installation of handrails and the removal of existing signs, lights and Christmas garland decorations and installation of new signage and lighting.

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Photo 1 – View of the front of the property

Photo 2 and 3– Close up view of the entrance

Photo 4 – Interior view of front entrance

Photo 5 and 6 – Streetview of the property and it's proximity to other Listed buildings

Schedule of Intervention:

In order to achieve the works, the following alterations/ interventions will be required:

- New slim line black retractable awning installed over the entrance door.
- Brass nosing to existing stone steps to prevent further damage to the front nosings and improve access for the visually impaired through greater contrast.
- Installation of 2no black and bronze handrails to either side of the stair to provide improved access for the ambulant disabled.
- Reinstatement of a flag pole to the LHS pilaster to aid the building identification for people walking from Reading centre.
- New signage and lighting over the windows.
- 4no. lights within the lightwell to highlight the pilasters.

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Setting Overview:

London Street is located in central Reading and is within the southern half of the Market Place/ London Street Conservation Area. The site is separated from central Reading by the busy Inner Distribution Road which is a dual carriageway, built in 1969. London street is a wide street with storey heights ranging from 2-4 storeys in height.

Extract from Conservation Area Appraisal:
London Street has medieval origins and is marked 'London Strete' on John Speed's 1611 map of Reading. Though many of London Street's building a have a distinctively Georgian, and later, appearance, parts of older structures can be found including cellars made from limestone 'quarried' from Reading Abbey, possibly in the 16th century. There are a few remaining 16th/17th century buildings including nos. 49-53 London Street, listed grade II, 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. Nos. 49/51 London Street contains 17th century paneling.
In the late 18th and 19th century, London Street was one of the fashionable parts of town and many of the elegant houses which lined either side of the road still survive. Though altered, no longer in residential use and devoid of their spacious rear gardens, these are the properties which today add grandeur to the streetscene. Then, as now, the street was unusually wide. Development at the 'top' and 'bottom' of the street, beside the London Road and IDR junctions respectively, is modern.
Until the arrival of the railway, London Street was the main route for coaches from the town centre to London, before they turned left into London Road. Today the street is more commercial than residential. It contains a high proportion of business and professional services.

The building in question was a stone fronted civic building for the Reading Literary Scientific and Mechanics Institution. It is characterised by its centrally placed elevated entrance and its dominant 3 storey Greek Ionic front engaged fluted columns and angle piers which support a Entablature and pediment . It has evenly places white painted timber sash windows.

Map taken from Historic England Listing Database. Property shown with a red dot.

Impacted Heritage Assets:

The building sits within the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area and lies within the Reading High Streets Heritage Action Zone.

The building is Listed and is also considered a local landmark building.

Official list entry

Heritage Category: Listed Building
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1113515
Date first listed: 22-Mar-1957
Statutory Address 1: NO 33 (FORMER EVERYMAN THEATRE), 33, LONDON STREET

Location
Statutory Address: NO 33 (FORMER EVERYMAN THEATRE), 33, LONDON STREET
The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.
District: Reading (Unitary Authority)
Parish: Non Civil Parish
National Grid Reference: SU 71800 73170

Details
LONDON STREET 1. 5128 (East Side) No 33 (former Everyman Theatre) SU 7173 SE 3/199 22.3.57. II GV 2. Formerly Primitive Methodist Chapel. Frieze inscribed "Primitive Methodist Chapel 1866", but in fact built 1843 as a Literary, Scientific and Mechanics' Institute. Architect: William Brown. 3 storeys. Symmetrical. Carefully developed Greek Ionic front engaged fluted columns and angle piers. Good detail. Entablature and pediment. Ground floor channelled. Scroll patterned moulded string at 1st floor cill level. 3 windows on 2nd floor with architrave surround. 3 on 1st floor, centre one with frieze and pediment, flanking windows with frieze and cornice. Central 6 panelled door and two 3-light windows on ground floor. Dickens read "Pickwick Papers" here.

Listing NGR: SU7180073170

Legacy
The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.
Legacy System number: 39026
Legacy System: LBS

The building is within the context of several Listed Buildings.

Official list entry
Heritage Category: Listed Building
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1302992
Date first listed: 14-Dec-1978
Statutory Address 1: 35, LONDON STREET
Location
Statutory Address: 35, LONDON STREET
The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.
District: Reading (Unitary Authority)
Parish: Non Civil Parish
National Grid Reference: SU 71807 73156

Details
LONDON STREET 1. 5128 (East Side) No 35 SU 7173 SE 3/310 II GV 2. Mid C19 - probably circa 1862-66 if built in connection with the adjoining Primitive Methodist Chapel (To 33 qv). 4 storeys. Bath stone with rustic quoins, entablature and blocking course. 1 range of tripartite windows with stone pier mullions glazing bar sashes 2nd floor, rest casements, blocks to cills on 2nd floor, bracketed stone balcony on 1st floor. Ground floor has altered shop front carried through from No 37.

Listing NGR: SU7180773156
Legacy
The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.
Legacy System number: 39027
Legacy System: LBS

Official list entry
Heritage Category: Listed Building
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1113516
Date first listed: 22-Mar-1957
Statutory Address 1: 37 AND 39, LONDON STREET

Location
Statutory Address: 37 AND 39, LONDON STREET
The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.
District: Reading (Unitary Authority)
Parish: Non Civil Parish
National Grid Reference: SU 71799 73147

Details
LONDON STREET 1. 5128 (East Side) Nos 37 and 39 su 7173 SE 3/198 22.3.57. II GV 2. Mid C18, incorporating part of an older house (see studs in throughpassage to right). Each 3 storey. No 39 built of silver grey header bricks with red dressings, quoins, string at 2nd floor level, painted brick dentil cornice, blue and red diaper pattern in parapet. Old tile roof. 3 windows on upper floors, glazing bar sashes. Early C19 shop front removed and heavy modern shop continued from No 35 to No 39 inserted. No 37 is a similar design to No 39 but red brick.

Listing NGR: SU7179973147
Legacy
The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.
Legacy System number: 39028
Legacy System: LBS

Assessment of Significance:

Heritage has cultural, social, economic and environmental values. The attributes that combine to define the significance of a historic building can relate to its physical properties or to its context. – BS 7913:2013.

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance – NPPF

Archeological:

There is no proposed below ground works so this has not been reviewed as part of this report.

Historic:

The building has had a varied life as a commercial building and was originally designed by Architect William Brown in 1843 for use as a theatre/ Institution. Charles Dickens was known to have frequently appeared there to read extracts of his work.

The land was acquired by the Reading Mechanics Institution when it was reformed in 1840 and Prince Albert become a patron. By 1843 its name was changed to the Reading Literary Scientific and Mechanics Institution its objects being the promotion of the study of literature and science.

By 1853 the building was converted into the Theatre Royal New Hall and a new proscenium was constructed inside.

By 1860s theatre numbers were decreasing and it was eventually sold to the Primitive Methodists in 1866 to replace their first chapel in Minister Street and it was converted into a chapel seating 850 people. It remained as this use for many years before it eventually closed in 1940 and left vacant before being bought by the council.

In 1952 Everyman Theatre opened it up after purchasing it from the council. They however fell into financial difficulties in 1957 and it returned to council ownership who allowed amateur theatre companies to use it.

It was then sold to the Reading Newspaper Company in 1960 before eventually becoming a hotel and bar called the Great Expectations.

Architectural or Artistic:

The building is unique in design and dominant in its street presence, designed as a civic building, theatrical in nature. Its external front elevation is of high significance within the street scene.

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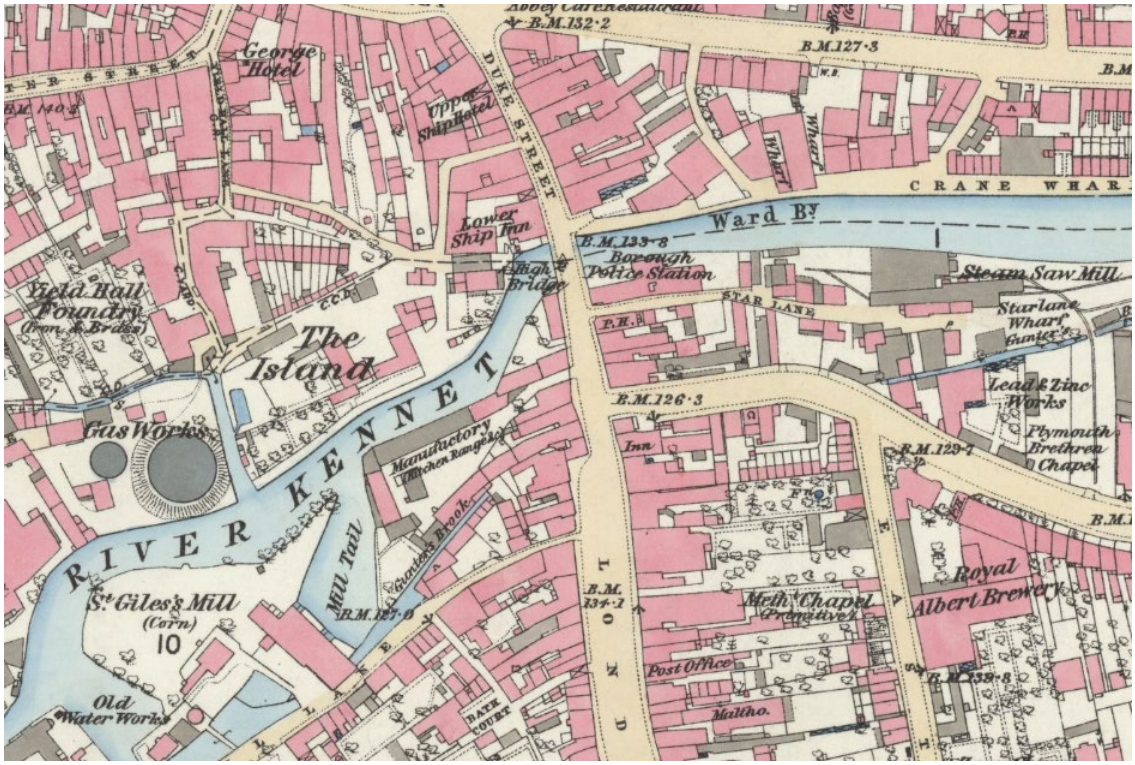
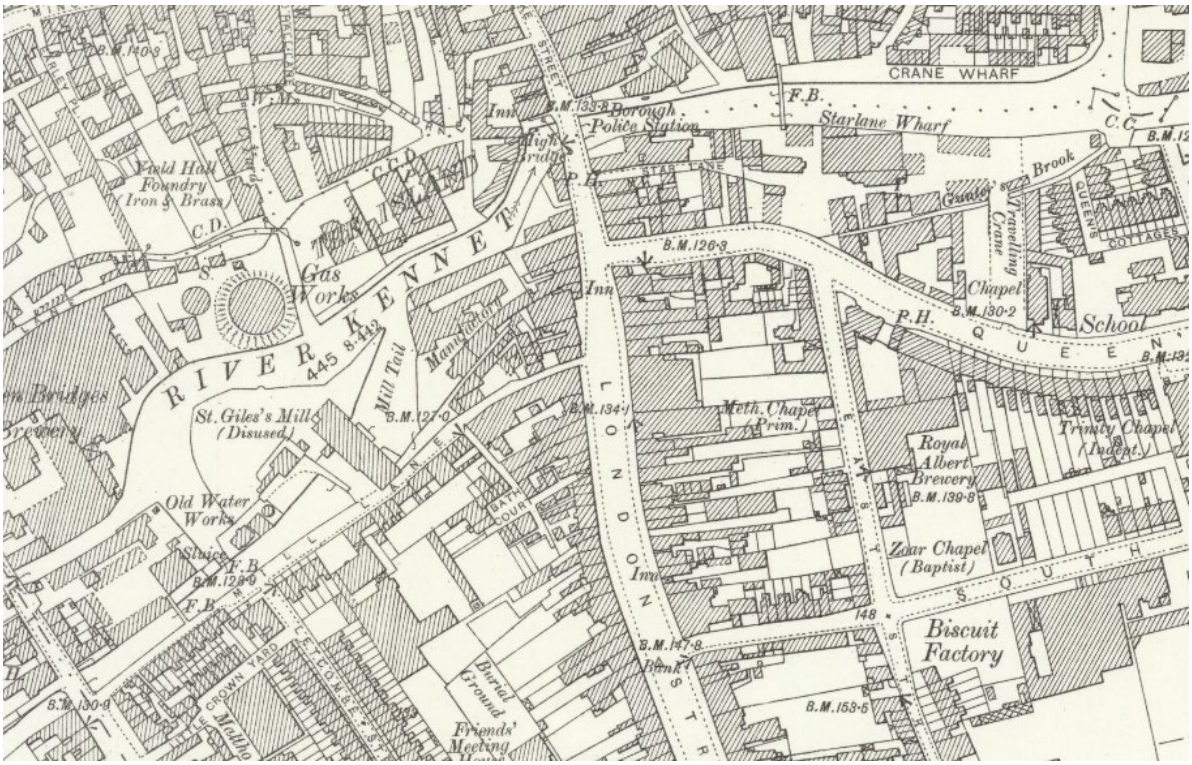
Historic Mapping – For reference dating only, not for reproduction



Extract from Berkshire XXXVII.3 1879



Extract from Berkshire XXXVII.3 1900

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Extract from Berkshire XXXVII.3 1912

Extract from Berkshire XXXVII.3 1934

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Historic Photographs – For reference dating only, not for reproduction

Date approx 1845. Photographer unknown. Reading Museum

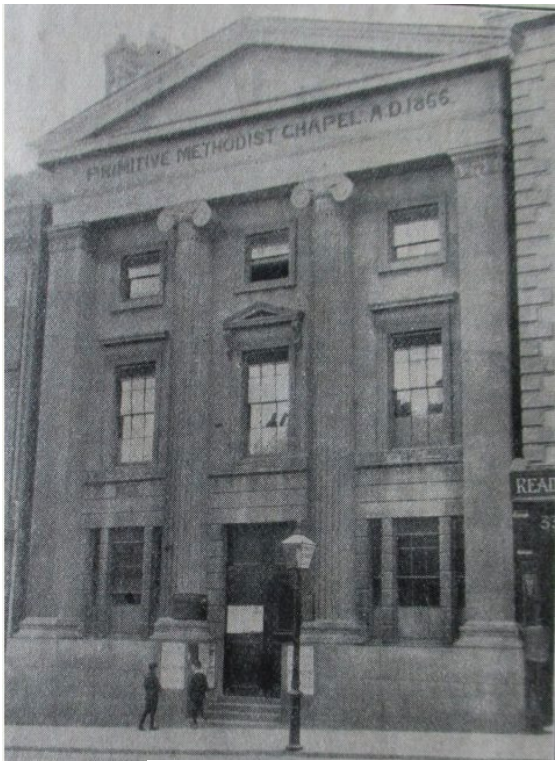

Photo 1915 *Handbook of the Primitive Methodist Conference 1915; Englesea Brook Museum*

Photo date unknown but assumed 1910/1918 Museum of English Rural Life

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Photo Approx 1960 – Reading Evening Standard and then Reading Post

Photo dated 2015 GW Oxley

Development Impact on the Historical Asset:

An assessment of how the proposed works will affect the significance of the heritage asset and the justification for that impact.
Proposals should and do:
1 - Avoid, minimise and mitigate negative impact, in a way that meets the objectives of the NPPF.
2 - Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance.

Building Elevations and Setting:

The adjustments improve the quality of the signage upon the building actively promoting and supporting its commercial use in a way that is reflective of both its current and original built purpose. The external lighting is also sympathetic to its original built purpose as a theatre bringing attention to the exterior of the building in a considered and high quality manner.

The external handrails and tread nosings improve the accessibility in a manner that is discrete and allows our built heritage to be enjoyed by a larger number of people without harm to historic detailing.

The slimline black awning over the front entrance provides a respectful and high quality canopy over the entrance to provide shelter during access but without the need for huge heatloss or risk of vandalism that would be created through the use of an open entrance lobby. The heritage harm potential from the alternative of an open lobby is an unacceptable risk to the Listed Building and economically unreasonable.

There are no loss of the original doors and windows through the proposed designs and the visual dominance of the buildings architectural detailing remains unimpacted.

There is no impact upon the side or rear elevation of the building.

Internally:

The proposals relate to the front exterior of the building only. There is no impact upon the interior.

Scale and Massing:

There is no impact upon the scale or massing of this building as a result of these proposals.

Archeaology:

There is no impact upon below ground archaeology as a result of these proposals.

Use:

The building remains in use as a hotel and bar so there is no impact through a change of use. A huge negative impact upon the local area is the high proportion of vacant commercial and retail space. This proposal actively supports a high quality commercial activity within the building that retains the commercial nature and vibrance within the local Conservation Area.

Relevant Policy:

The Government has set out its planning policies for the historic environment in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This was published in March 2012 and replaced in 2018, 2019 and 2021. It replaced Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment. The PPS5 Practice Guide remains valid for use alongside the NPPF. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting.

The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.

Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of: (a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; (b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and (c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Historic England 'Conservation Principles' deem new work or alteration to be normally acceptable where the proposals do not materially harm the value of the place. They consider the setting of the heritage asset to contribute greatly to its significance. They accept that a heritage setting changes over time.

The local authority guidance also includes policies which seek to ensure the protection of the historic environment and that development is of a high quality and seeks to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Heritage Asset, in this case the surrounding Conservation Areas.

Changes to the setting of historic buildings / Conservation Areas are to be sympathetic in terms of siting, proportion, scale, form, height, materials and detailing. All design work and procedures should follow guidance outlined in BS 7913:2013 Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings.

Conclusion:

The proposals are high quality and are respectful of the original design intent of the building and the streetscene as a whole. They allow the promotion of a commercial enterprise without the loss of architectural detailing to allow it to continue to offer a historic building ongoing high quality investment. The Conservation Area as a whole suffers from vacant commercial premises and the council should actively support this ongoing commercial use which does not cause harm to the scale or significance of the Listed Building or its setting.

The new addition of handrails and nosing to the front steps allow an ambulant disabled person to enjoy the historic building in the same manner as the other building users without causing heritage harm, this supports a core value of bodies such as Historic England. The adaptations are minor and reversible in nature and should be supported as they can be installed without loss of historic detailing or harm to the overall external appearance.

The new signage and lighting is respectful of the character of the original building, proportionate in nature and does not involve the loss of historic material.

Overall the proposals contribute to the ongoing investment in the heritage asset of both the building and the streetscene and should be supported by the local authority.

Assessor Details:
Surveyor: Michelle Purnell BA(hons) BArch RIBA MSc Building Conservation IHBC
Date of Site Visit:16/01/23 Weather conditions at time of visit: Dry, Cold

Information Source Checklist:
The following information sources have been used when conducting desk based research:
Historic England List of Protected Historic Sites x
National Planning Policy Framework x
Planning Practice Guidance: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment x
Relevant Local Plans x
Conservation Area Character Appraisal x
Local Authority Landscape Character Assessment n/a
The Local List of Buildings and Monuments x
Local Records Office Other (please state):