

Memo

WITHOUT PREJUDICE

To: Ryan Allen
From: Buju Can Cetin, Conservation Officer
Date: 26/01/2024
Re: Conservation Officer response

Application Number: 230602

Application Type: Advertisement Consent

Address: Great Expectations Ph 33 London Street Reading RG1 4PS

Proposal: Slim line black awning with logo over door

Summary

Objection – The proposal would be harmful to the historic and architectural features of the ground floor of the listed building, particularly its channelling, ornamentation of this classical style building, and the perception of the building's façade composition as a whole. It would also be an intrusive element negatively affecting the visual amenity of the conservation area. As such, the proposal is contrary to the policies EN1, EN3 and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan and not acceptable on heritage grounds.

Relevant policies and legislation

From the point of view of the historic environment, the main statutory tests are set out within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Sections 16(2) and 66 require that **special regard** be given to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 also requires the Council to pay **special attention** to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of designated Conservation Areas.

National Planning Policy and Guidance

The NPPF outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment. Chapter 16 of the NPPF (2023) 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development.

Paragraph 203 requires local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraph 205 of the NPPF requires that '*when considering the impact of a proposed development on the **significance** of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation....*' And paragraph 206 says, '*any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration...) should require **clear and***

convincing justification'. Paragraph 208 says that *'where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighted against the **public benefits** of the proposal...'*

National Planning Practice Guidance on Historic Environment provides context to the NPPF.

Local Planning Policy and Guidance

Policy EN1 'Protection and enhancement of the historic environment' of the Reading Borough Local Plan sets out the Council's aspirations for the historic environment. The policy requires that all proposals to protect and, where possible, enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. It echoes the NPPF by stating, *"Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits"*.

Applications which affect **Listed Buildings** are expected not to have an adverse impact on the elements that contribute to their special architectural or historic interest, including **their settings**.

Policy EN3 'Enhancement of conservation areas' of the Reading Borough Local Plan requires that development proposals within Conservation Areas **contribute positively to local character and distinctiveness**. This policy further states *"Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas. These may include:*

- ***Reducing visual clutter caused by negative factors, such as poles and overhead wires, satellite dishes or unnecessary street furniture;***
- *Restoring original building features;*
- ***Removing inappropriate additions or alterations to buildings;***
- *Improving signage and street furniture;*
- *Restoring or re-establishing appropriate paving, railings or walls;*
- *..."*

Council's Policy OU4 – Advertisement requires all advertisements to comply with the following criteria:

"a) Advertisements will not obstruct windows, any other sign already located on the building, or cut across significant architectural features such as historic fascias, windows, pilasters, cornices or scrolls;

...

c) Advertisements on listed buildings or in Conservation Areas will respect or enhance the building or area, and will respect the key features of the special historic interest;

..."

Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal is also a material consideration in determining applications for development.

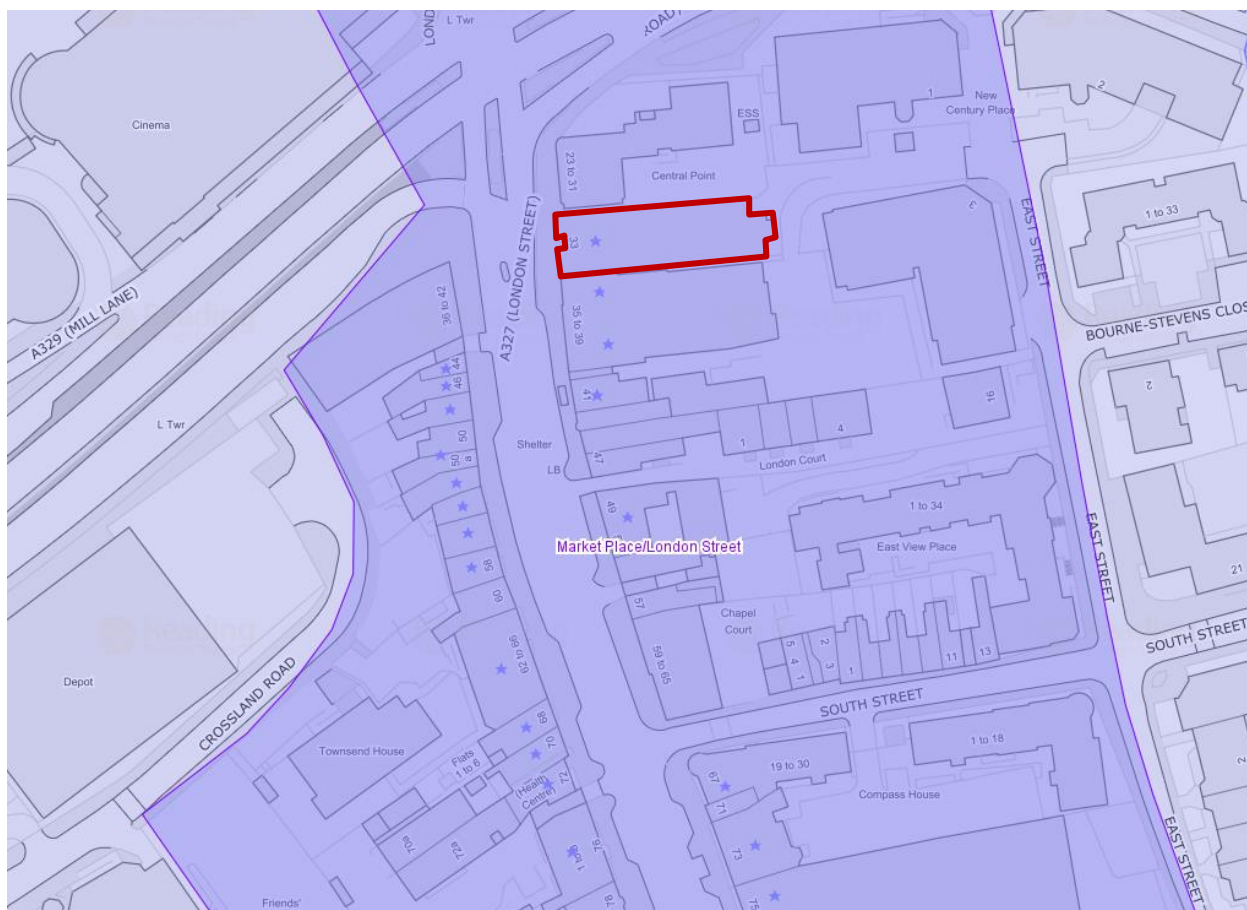
Other Guidance

Historic England Advice Note 2 – Making changes to Heritage Assets illustrates the application of policies set out in the NPPF in determining applications for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent.

English Heritage's "Conservation Principles" provides policy and guidance for the "sustainable management of the historic environment".

Relevant heritage assets

The application relates to a Grade II listed building, No 33 London Road (Former Everyman Theatre) dating from 1843 located on London Street, one of the medieval streets in Reading, and within the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area designated in 1972 (extended in 1982). There are several listed buildings and buildings of townscape merit lining up on each side of London Street within the immediate vicinity of the subject building. Grade II listed buildings are 35 London Street (mid-19th century), 37 and 39 London Street (mid-18th century), 41 London Street (mid-19th century), Nos 49-53 London Street (16th century with later alterations), 44 and 46 London Street (mid-18th century), 48-52 London Street (mid-18th century), and 54-58 London Street (1753).



The application site (outlined in red), Listed buildings (purple starred), Conservation Area (light purple)

Significance of heritage assets

The NPPF defines significance as the “*value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest.*”

The interest may be architectural or historic, as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Section 1.

“Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.” (NPPF, 2023)

Historic England assesses significance in a similar manner, referring to evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal values of a place.

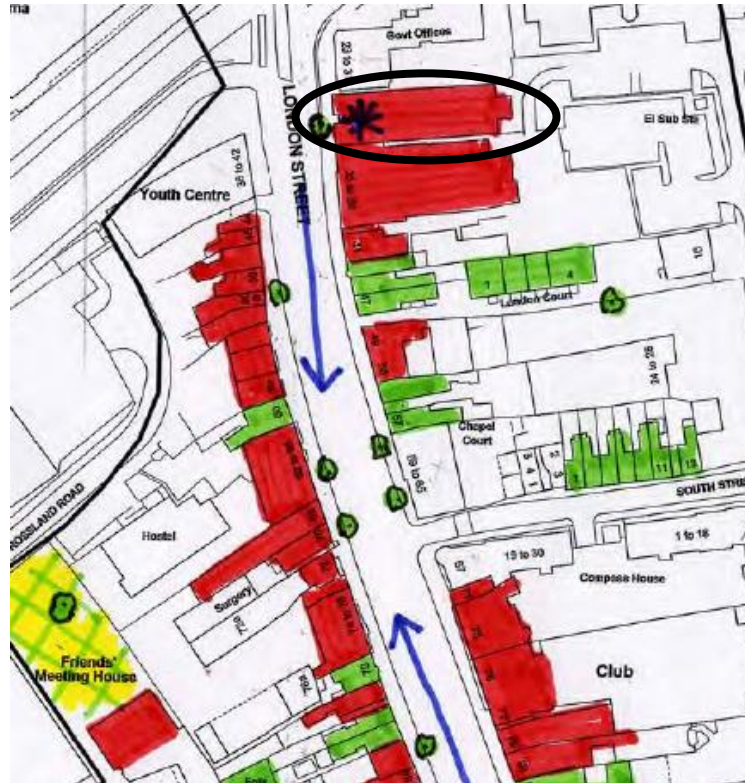
In this case, the significance of the listed building is its historic fabric and architecture, its setting within the historic environment of London Street, and its position with respect to the character and appearance of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. It is also a landmark and contributes to the significance of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area.

The official listing of the subject building states:

“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”



View of the subject listed building



The application site/subject listed building (circled), other listed building (red), and buildings of townscape merit (green) within the character area 1 – London Street south of the IDR of the conservation area (Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal)

Impact of proposal upon heritage asset(s)

The application is accompanied by the Heritage Statement, which includes historic photographs of the façade of the listed building, which clearly shows there have been different uses occupied by the building, including the installation of some elements and signage. However, it should be noted that none of that additions were as dominant as the existing ones, which negatively affect the legibility of the original façade.



Photograph of London Street from the 1840s (Left) and Façade of the listed building in 1915 (Right)



Photographs of the listed building from the 1960s



Existing and Proposed Elevations

The proposal would erect an awning at the entrance which would seriously harmful to the appearance of the listed building, London Street and the conservation area as it would be another inappropriate addition to the façade of the listed building which is attractive and monumental with rich ornamentation. The historic and architectural feature of the ground floor, particularly its channelling, an ornamentation of this classical style building, and the perception of the building's façade composition as a whole would be negatively affected by the proposal which would separate the ground floor and the upper floors of the building by creating a solid black horizontal line along the facade.

The building requires only one signage, which would respect the key features of the special interest. In addition, the existing ground floor plan (submitted with the application ref. 230641) shows two lobbies of the existing use that the awning could not be justified as a necessity.

Therefore, the proposal does not meet the requirements of Policies EN1, EN3 and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Conservation response

- ☐ No objections
- ☐ No objections subject to conditions attached
- ☐ Clarification required
- ☒ Object

Contact details

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