

Heritage Statement

161 Oxford Road RG1 7UY



1. INTRODUCTION

This statement is provided in support of a planning application submitted by Markham Associates for their dental practice sign at 161 Oxford Road. This application is pending on submission of a Full application and a Listed Building Consent application for the changes to the front elevation of 161 Oxford Road, which is a grade 2 listed building. The purpose of providing this Heritage Statement is to emphasise the importance of complying with the policies for a listed building and to mitigate any potential harm to heritage assets.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS

161 is a mid-terraced property within the row of terraced properties 149-169 Oxford Road. These properties are early-mid 18th-century buildings, which were listed in 1978 as grade II listed buildings with entry number 1113546. 149-169 Oxford Road was listed as England's historic heritage because of its distinctive architectural features. They were built with red bricks, 2 rows of the grey brick band, stucco cornices, arched doorways with recessed paneled entrance doors, sash windows with glazing bars, shallow pitched slate roof, and brick chimneys.

3. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The listed description of features refers entirely to the external elements and aesthetics of the buildings which are regarded as significant. Any addition or changes to the front elevations would need to be complying with national and local policies for listed buildings and to be assessed to what extent they can be implemented.

Policy number OU4 of Reading Local Plan does not dismiss the use of advertisements on a listed building but states:

Clause (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”;

Clause (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”;

Clause 4.7.26

“Care should be taken to ensure that illumination is in keeping with the character of the area, particularly where it would affect heritage assets, for instance face or halo illumination of individual letters may be appropriate and discreet slim-line LED downlighters may be acceptable. Advertisements above ground floor level are particularly prominent and care should be taken to avoid detrimental effects on visual amenity”.

Historic England States:

“The erection of an advertisement is controlled under the Town and County Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 (ref.1). The erection of an outdoor advertisement does not require planning permission, provided it is properly authorised under the regulations.”

4. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The listed row of terraced buildings 149-169 has different uses consisting of 149-153 residential, 155 and 157 residential with ground floor shops, 159 a residential, 161 Markham Associates, 163 residential, 165 Dental Surgery, and 167-169 residential properties.

155 and 157 having ground floor shops omit the main features of arched doorways, ground floor windows, and the grey brick band.

165 the Dental Surgery uses horizontal signage above two ground windows, which covers the top section of arched windows and brick features.

Taking into account the varied uses and appearances of 149-169 Oxford Road, it can be concluded that the existing listed buildings 149-169 have no consistent pattern and the buildings with commercial uses and business uses deter from the characteristic of the original buildings.

The existing signage is an illuminated sign and has been designed vertically to make the best use of available space on the front elevation of the building. It does not cover any architectural features of the building as were originally listed in entry number 1113546 of England Historic Heritage. These features are not obstructed and remain visible. The use of horizontal signage would have covered the soldier brick course feature above the ground floor window as is the case for 165 Oxford Road. The available space above the ground floor

window is 6 brick courses or 450mm. This would have resulted in stretching the sign across the entire width of the building, which would have looked visually odd and unattractive.

The sign is illuminated by daylight sensors, which are activated when the daylight level is diminished, similar to street lights.

There are no specific national or local plan policies to restrict the use of signage on a listed building and no limitation on size or the illumination intensity for the proposed signage. However, the guidance in clause 4.7.29 states that the maximum permitted intensity of lighting for the illuminated sign for well-inhabited rural and urban settlements or small town centres should be 600cd/m².

5. MITIGATION MEASURES

The existing sign is fully illuminated; however, the applicant has consulted the manufacturer who confirms that the existing sign can be modified to selectively lit up the individual letters and logo making the background opaque. The manufacturer also confirms that the illumination level can be adjusted to be a maximum 600cd/ m² and incorporate a sensor to lit up the sign in the absence of sufficient daylight, synchronized with street lighting.

7. CONCLUSION

The Markham Associates require necessary signs on his premises to advertise his practice. The sign needs to be prominent and visible to pedestrians and passing drivers whilst respecting the requirements for a listed building and National and Reading Local Plan Policies. The existing sign will be modified to satisfy the requirements for an illuminated sign. The existing sign complies with the following policies:

- The sign has been specifically designed to make use of the available space on the front elevation of the building without affecting the significant historic features. An alternative horizontal sign could have been more harmful obscuring the listed building's brick features and visually unattractive setting immediately under the first floor windows.
- The existing listed terrace 149-169 has no consistent use and pattern to dictate a sympathetic appearance in the street scene.
- The existing sign is designed with settled colours and uses no striking colours to visually cause any destruction to pedestrians and motorists.
- The existing sign will be modified to maintain its original appearance but would only illuminate the individual letters and logo complying with the recommended illumination level and being lit up when daylight is diminished.

Therefore, it would be appreciated if this application is granted permission.