



Conversion of premises to part coffee shop and part
variety club with extension to the rear and
alterations the basement

HERITAGE STATEMENT
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Heritage Statement was commissioned by PDR Ltd to support the application for planning permission and Listed Building Consent required to convert the existing building to a new café/coffee shop in the front portion linked to a small venue such as a comedy club to the rear, within a 2 and 3 storey extension with basement.
- 1.2 The current applications follow as series of earlier proposals and permissions for the demolition of the rear modern extensions and the conversion of the historic front portion of the property to café/restaurant use whilst a new extension would be constructed to the rear for a club linked to 9 Gun Street.
- 1.3 Demolition of the rear portion of the building has already taken place and planning permission reference 151282 was formally commenced but the construction and completion of the proposed building did not continue due to issues relating to financial viability of the use and the changing markets.
- 1.4 The new scheme to which this report relates, includes a smaller venue building attached to a café type use within the historic portion allowing for a more flexible pattern of use.
- 1.5 The Heritage Statement has been prepared in accordance with the advice and requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 194. The author has visited the site and taken site photographs of the property. The collections within the Berkshire Records Office have been interrogated and relevant material has been supplemented by on-line and hard copy records to support the accuracy of this report. The heritage significance of the property has informed the extent and design of the alterations now presented for consideration by the Local Planning Authority and the protection of the significance and setting of the surrounding listed buildings has been taken into account.
- 1.6 The structure of this statement takes its cue from guidance set out in Historic England's Advice Note 12 – *Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets published in October 2019*. It aims to demonstrate the impact of the proposal on heritage significance. In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) the level of detail in support of the application for planning permission and Listed Building Consent is no more than is necessary to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the significance of the asset¹ and for the local planning authority to reach an informed decision. Activities to conserve or investigate the asset are proportionate to the significance of the heritage assets affected and the impact on that significance.²
- 1.7 The first part of this Statement deals with the assessment of historical interest of the building within its setting (Statement of Significance) whilst the second part deals with an analysis of the impact of the proposal (Heritage Impact Assessment). This report should be read in conjunction with drawings submitted with the planning and Listed Building Consent applications.

¹ National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 194

² Historic England (2015). *Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment*. 2nd ed. London: Historic England. p1 para 3.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

2. Location, Setting and Description

- 2.1 The property is located on the south side of Gun Street opposite the southern boundary of St Mary's Church on St Mary's Butts. The building frontage stands on the back of pavement edge and the site extend south-eastwards across the Holy Brook which has been part culverted at this point. Further south beyond the boundary of the site is The Oracle Centre with pedestrian footpath and access in between. The footpath opens onto the rear access road serving the properties in Gun Street (Figure 1).

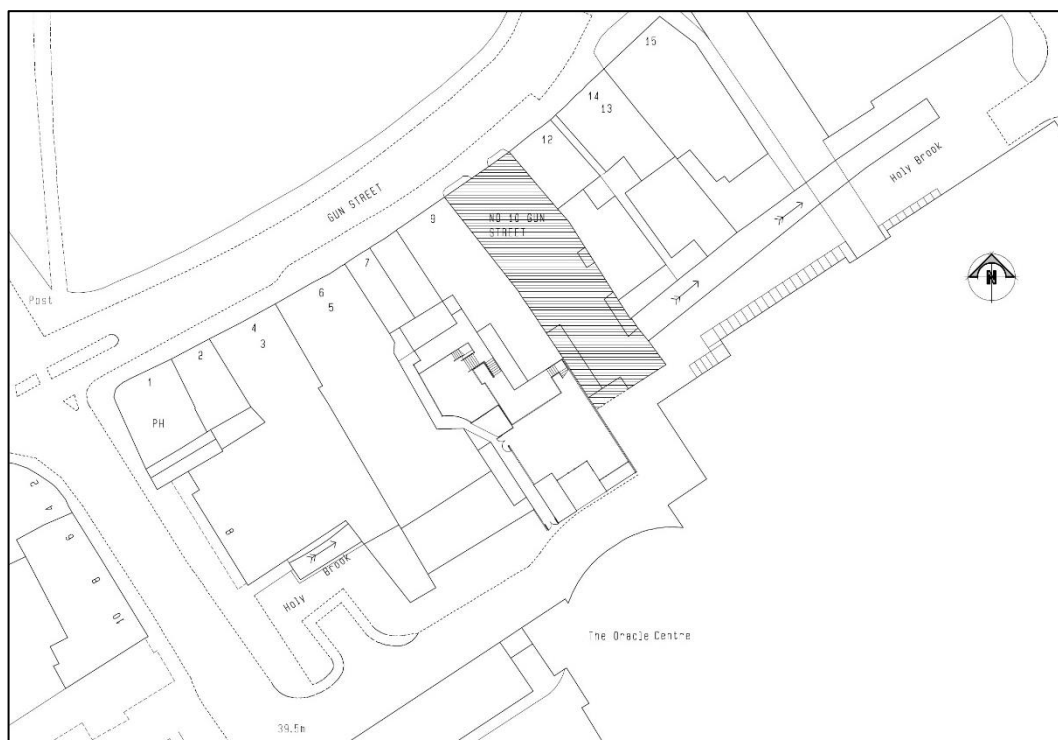


Figure 1: Location plan

- 2.2 The property forms part of a continuous frontage on the south side of Gun Street. Most of the other properties forming the frontage are retailers or restaurants. 10 Gun Street is currently empty. The modern building extension to the rear has long since been demolished and the site is unused and has been for many years whilst the development potential has been considered. The rear elevations of the old remaining part of the property remains largely intact and is just visible over hoardings protecting the site or from an elevated vantage point (Figure 2).



Figure 2: View from elevated vantage point showing the cleared site and back of the historic property

- 2.3 The building is a three storey house faced in red brick in Flemish Bond. Remnants of Tuck pointing are evident (Figure 3) on the front elevation. Since this was a very expensive practice even in its heyday, it indicates that the building was of high status at the time of construction. The building is constructed in the Palladian Revivalist style of the first half of the 18th century typically with little decoration other than the doorway and with a string course above the ground floor windows and a cornice at the top.

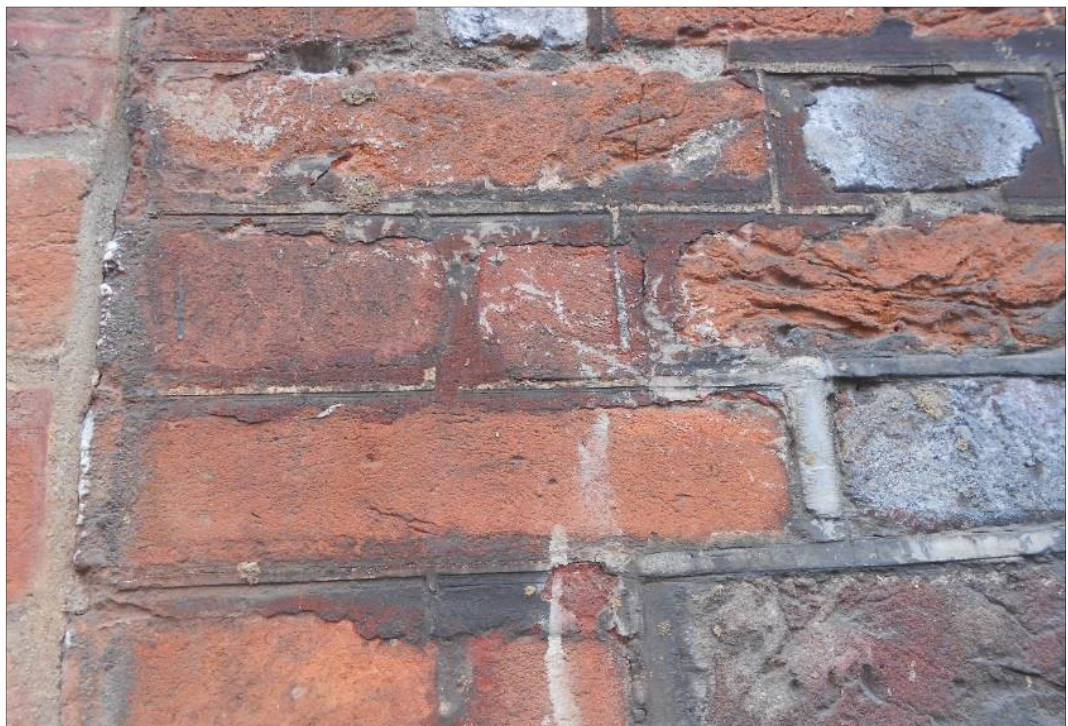


Figure 3: Remains of Tuck pointing on the front elevation

- 2.4 The frontage is formed of two distinct bays, each with two windows on first and second floors. These have exposed sash boxes indicating that they originate from prior to the rules in 1774 requiring them to be fully hidden behind the outer face of the wall. The first and second floors are divided by a stucco string course. At ground floor level the frontage has a near-central doorway with pedimented canopy and heavy timber brackets supporting it on moulded architraves. The panelled timber door is not Georgian and is half glazed with 6 small glass panels in a Victorian style. A fanlight is above the door, but this has had its original glazing pattern replaced by plain glass.
- 2.5 On the left hand side of the door is a large window with moulded mullions and transom and timber painted fascia over. To the right hand side of the doorway is a square protruding bay window with multiple panes held by slim glazing bars. All the sashes and the ground floor bay windows form a Victorian shopfront.

3 Designations

- 3.1 The property was listed in December 1978 as Grade II. The listing description says:

Early C18. 3 storeys. Red brick with grey header diaper, stucco string to 2nd floor, moulded wooden eaves cornice, old tile roof. Tile hung gable. 4 ranges of cross glazed sash windows. Early C19 shop bay with glazing bars to right and an C18 door with architrave surround and bracketed to open pediment good. A modern 3-light window on ground floor. Small C18 staircase with turned balusters and short moulded pendants.

- 3.2 The site is also within the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area which was designated in 1972. The special interest which justifies designation of this Conservation Area includes its position at the Saxon Centre of Reading at a cross-roads of the main east-west and north-south routes through the town, The Grade I listed Church of St Mary in St Mary's Butts, the churchyard associated with the church and other buildings within the vicinity of the church including some of the oldest surviving buildings in Reading and a concentration of 16th, 17th and 18th century buildings of interest.
- 3.3 The Holy Brook which runs under the rear boundary of 10 Gun Street forms the southern boundary of the Conservation Area. Like the southern part in which Gun Street is located, the rest of the Conservation Area is surrounded by post-1970s development. The Conservation Area is a tight knit urban area composed of continuous frontages of two and three storey buildings to the back of the pavement edge. So Gun Street is typical of the distinctive character of the area.
- 3.4 The Conservation Area is divided into three character areas with The Gun Street and Castle Street frontages forming one of these. These streets are reflective of the medieval street pattern and have good examples of buildings dating from all periods from the sixteenth century. It formed a boundary to the church land that was previously occupied by Alms Houses and later the graveyard extension. It is shown on John Speed's map of 1611 as a street of dwellings prior to the building that we see today (Figure 4).

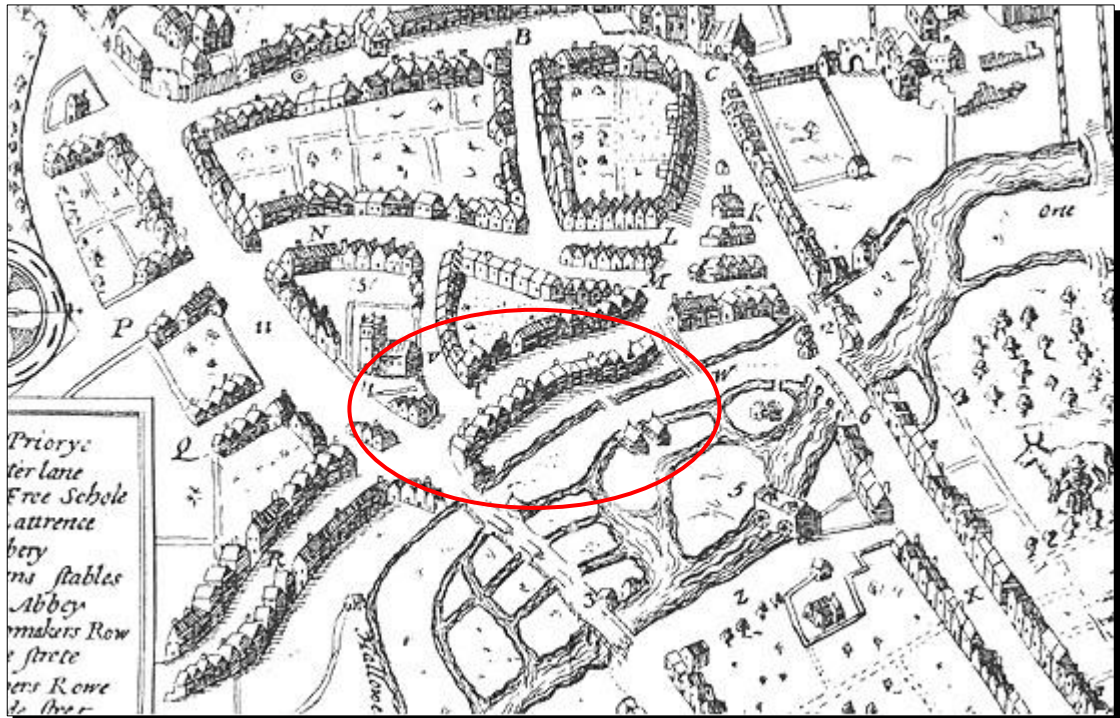


Figure 4: Extract of John Speed's map of 1611 showing Gun Street as a continuation of Minster Street just south east of St Mary's Church

4 Assessment of Significance

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines significance as '*The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest.*' Such interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic and '*it may derive not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting*'. Significance is what conservation sustains, and where appropriate enhances, in managing change to heritage assets.
- 4.2 This section describes the building, its site or setting, and its key features in sufficient detail to understand its heritage interest. It is a prerequisite for understanding the impact of the proposals on the heritage value of the property and helps to shape the design of development and alterations.

Historical significance

- 4.3 Historical value comes from a structure's relationship to people, events, and aspects of life in the past. It may be illustrative, by demonstrating important facets of the past to help understand the historic environment, or it may be associative, by being linked to a notable historical person or event.
- 4.4 10 Gun Street is based on a 16th century timber framed building which was rebuilt (or more accurately, over built and remodelled) in the first half of the 18th century with the earliest Title Deeds on record dating to 1753. The original building has been incorporated into the 18th century building envelope. The timber frame in the roof reveals the 16th century origins. The upper floor has been inserted into the timber frame and the space later enlarged. The frontage was re-faced with high quality red brick, and tuck pointed.

- 4.5 The building is constructed with 3 storeys and an additional attic space has been inserted within the 16th century roof structure giving 3½ storeys of accommodation plus the basement. This arrangement is borne out by reference to an insurance plan by Goad of 1895 which indicates the storey heights at that time (Figure 5). The stair tower to the rear is of interest. It appears to be of 18th century construction but has been subsequently rebuilt.

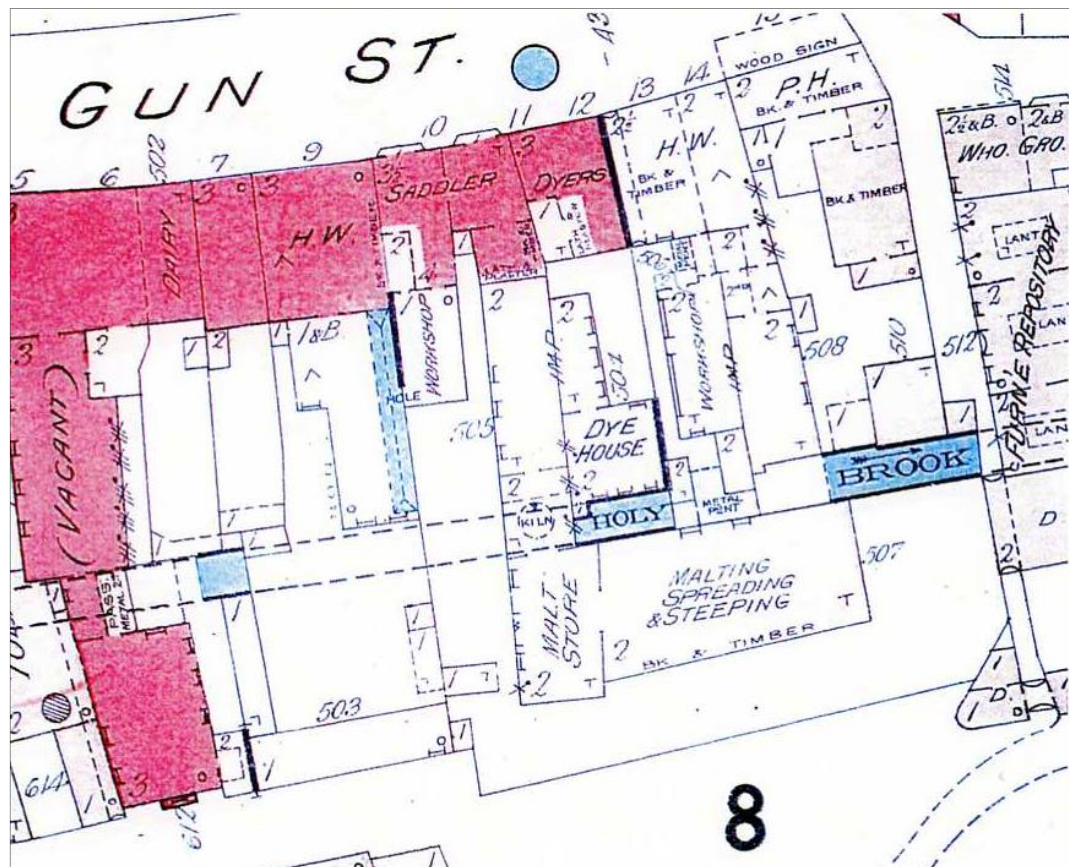


Figure 5: Extract of Goad's Fire Insurance site survey of 1895 indicating the storey heights in the corner of each building

- 4.6 The site has seen considerable change in its time with several distinct periods of development affecting the rear of the building involving a number of building phases constructed and subsequently demolished and re-built.
- 4.7 The building was originally a private house associated with significant families and figures in Reading until about 1845. The first recorded owner was Tyler Cleeter, a Maltster from Henley who leased or re-leased it to Adam Smith a brewer. It was subsequently occupied by various people including independent “gentlemen” and was passed down the Cleeter family several times.
- 4.8 The turning point seems to have been in about 1840 when the property was owned by Sir William Cubitt, the great English civil engineer, who eventually sold it to John Weedon and it is about this time (1845) that records start to indicate a changed from residential use to a more commercial use of the property.
- 4.9 John Weedon sold the property to Harris and Hewett, brewers of the Victoria Brewery in nearby Chain Street. However, in 1852 it is recorded in Slaters Directory, that 10 Gun Street was occupied by Joseph Boarton, as saddler. The front of the property is recorded in a number

of subsequent directories as a saddler's shop whilst the rear extensions were used as a malthouse (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Extract of OS Town Map surveyed in 1876, published 1879 showing the house with Malthouse to the rear

4.10 From around 1900 to 1937, the Saddlery shop was run by John Henry Warr (Figure 7).

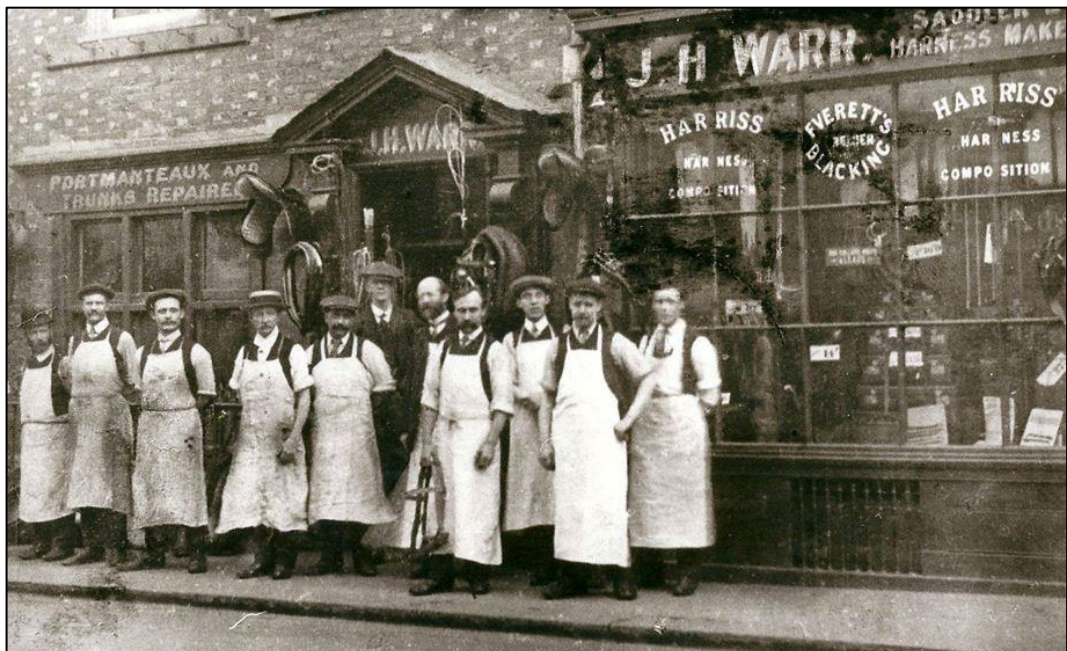


Figure 7: Photograph of c.1900 showing frontage largely as it exists today [Courtesy Reading Civic Society]

4.11 Warr unfortunately died in 1937 intestate and the building was subsequently sold to the Reading Medical Society Ltd. By this time, the building had been extended at the rear. In 1929 Goad's plan showed the eastern 2 storey range at the rear as Marine Stores and a workshop to the rear. By 1935 this eastern range was described as a Glass Works (Figure 8).

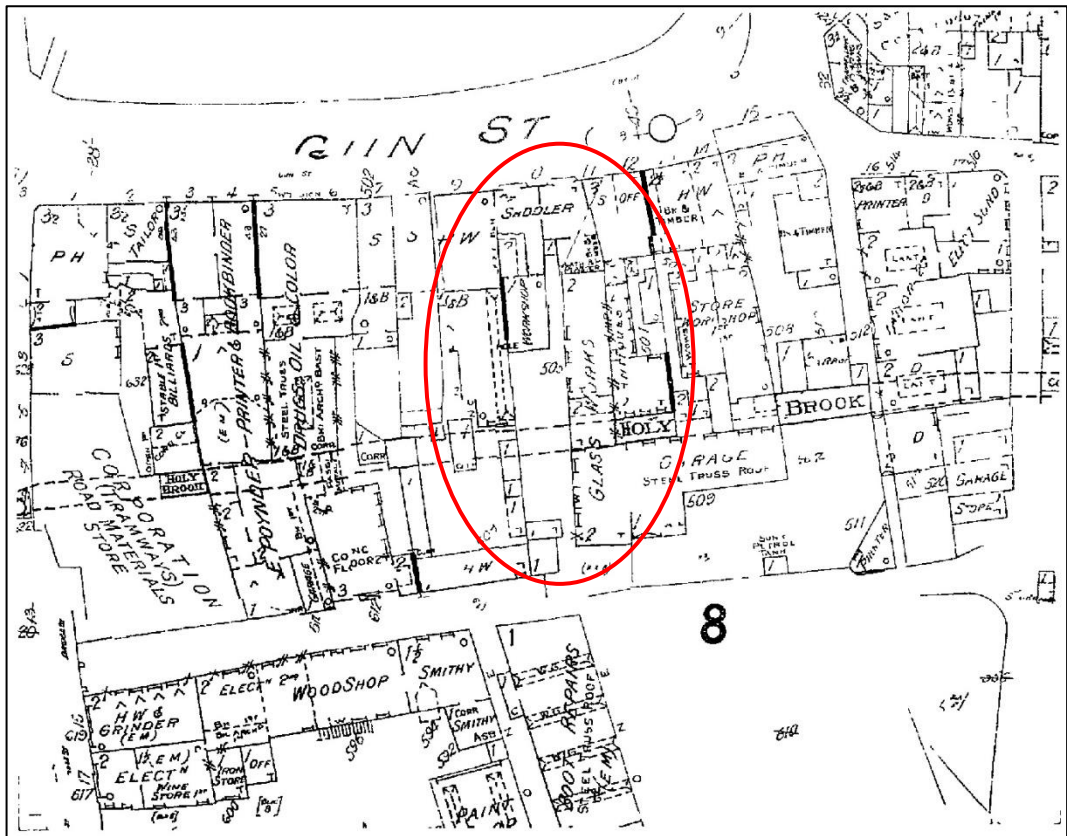


Figure 8: Extract of Goad's Insurance plan 1935 showing extension at rear forming Glass Works

- 4.12 In 1938 the kiln chimney which served the glass works business and stood at the rear of the property partially over the Holy Brook, was demolished and a health centre was constructed.
- 4.13 An article in the British Medical Journal Supplement of June 3rd 1939 indicates that the staircase was retained as well as the frontage and other old features, but it is clear that there was a phase of refurbishment at this time which made additional alterations (Figure 9). It is possible that it was during this phase of work that the stair tower was reconstructed. A succession of medical office uses then followed and various alterations internally to accommodation offices and a conference room were carried out.
- 4.14 The ownership of the property seems to have changed as responsibility for Health in the area changed. By 1979 ownership is recorded as Berkshire Area Health Authority. In 1989, Listed Building Consent was given for internal alterations to the first floor and by 1997 there were plans for demolition and redevelopment of the rear of the property. Part of the rear of the property had been subject to a Compulsory Purchase Order to enable the development of the Oracle Shopping Centre.

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READING MEDICAL SOCIETY'S NEW PREMISES

Reading Medical Society moved to new premises recently, and at the opening ceremony the manager of the society, Mr. W. G. Blair, told something of its history. The society, he said, was probably the oldest Public Medical Service in the country, since it came into being as the result of a legacy, given in 1802, consisting of two cottages in Chain Lane, as Chain Street was then called, the income from which was to provide medical attention for the sick poor of Reading. A charity known as the Reading Dispensary Trust was created, which in time extended its activities to provide, in addition to free treatment, medical attention for those who could pay a small weekly contribution. When the National Health Insurance Act was passed in 1912 the medical profession took over the organization from the Reading Dispensary Trust, and permitted every doctor in the town who so desired to be a medical officer of the Borough of Reading Medical Society Ltd., which was expressly formed to provide a Public Medical Service for the dependants of insured persons and others of a similar status. Until 1939 the society carried out its beneficent work in Chain Street, but its growth called for additional accommodation, and it was decided to purchase 10, Gun Street, which has been converted into up-to-date offices, dispensary, and surgeries, a fine staircase of the early eighteenth century and certain other old features, including the frontage, being retained.

The Reading Medical Society is not the only occupant of 10, Gun Street; it has been found possible to provide accommodation also for the Berkshire Public Medical Service, the Reading Insurance Committee with its ancillary organizations, the Reading Panel Committee, and the Reading Scheme for Nursing Services. In addition the Ministry of Health uses the rooms as a medical and dental examination centre.

Figure 9: Extract from the British Medical Journal Supplement of June 3rd 1939

- 4.15 The property was purchased from West Berkshire Health Authority in 2004. No. 9, The Purple Turtle is now in the same ownership. Since then a series of applications have sought and received permission for demolition of the rear 20th century extensions and replacement (Figure 10).

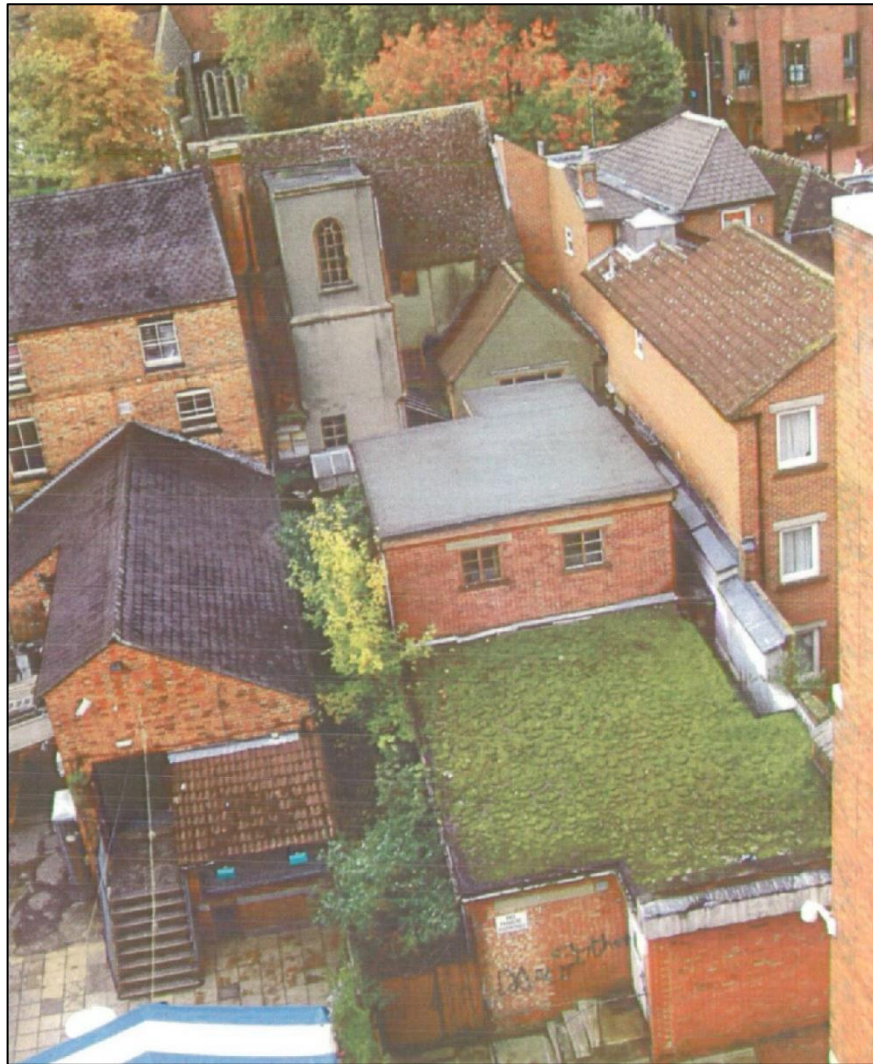


Figure 10: View of rear of 10 Gun Street prior to demolition

Evidential significance (Archaeological)

- 4.16 Evidential significance is derived from the potential of a place to yield significant evidence, usually physical remains, about past human activity. Such physical remains are relied on for providing information about undocumented aspects of the past, making age a strong indicator of relative evidential value.
- 4.17 As mentioned above, the property has undergone some alterations over its lifetime. Some of the changes, including the extensions to the rear date from the 19th century commercial use of the building and have since been removed. What remains, is the shell and remnants of the original 18th century house and vestiges of the earlier building in the attic.
- 4.18 The main roof framework appears to be 16th century and gives clues to the domestic premises over which the Georgian property was constructed. The timber frame has clasped purlins and cambered collars. The collar is the main curved timber seen at low head height when entering the attic. The curved wind braces are of early to mid-16th century style. One of the trusses (central) has Queen Posts but they would appear to be later insertions perhaps to strengthen a deteriorated original framework (Figure 11).



Figure 11: Early to mid-16th century roof frame. The tie beam can be seen at floor level below the Queen truss.

- 4.19 The cambered tie beams are visible at floor level giving the evidence to confirm that the attic floor was inserted at a later date. Many of the ties and braces have been removed and there is no ridge member. The timbers have been lime washed. The rafters are all new with sarking felt added. 20th century metal bracket repairs have been made to the joints at the connection with the purlins on both sides of the central bay.

- 4.20 The stair tower cheeks and flat roof are constructed off the main roof truss rafters with lightweight studwork. It has been reconstructed using cement (probably post-war), and now exhibits considerable damp and vermin penetration. The window at 2nd floor level is an insertion.

- 4.21 The stair case is 18th century but may not be original to the house. It is possible that it was salvaged from elsewhere and cut down to be inserted into what is rather a tight space. This gives rise to the theory that there was a pre-existing stair tower into which the altered staircase was inserted in the 18th century (Figure 12), or it was simply relocated from the house when the extensions were constructed. The poor continuity of timber runs indicates some adaptation has taken place plus there are cuts in the hand rail to make it fit. Despite this, the staircase is an important feature of the building and contributes to the heritage significance of the old house.

- 4.22 The ground, first and second floors have all been altered during the time the building was used as offices. Separate rooms have been amalgamated by removal of internal walls and the remaining walls have been replastered. Circulation to the larger office block (now demolished) has been achieved by inserting doors in the back wall.



Figure 12: View of staircase

- 4.23 On the ground floor, the building is entered via the central doorway into a corridor. Originally, it is likely that this would have had openings on either side to gain entrance into the side rooms (later shops) but these have been blocked up. There are slight scars on the walls to reveal this and the hollow sound betrays the location of filled in doorways (Figure 13).

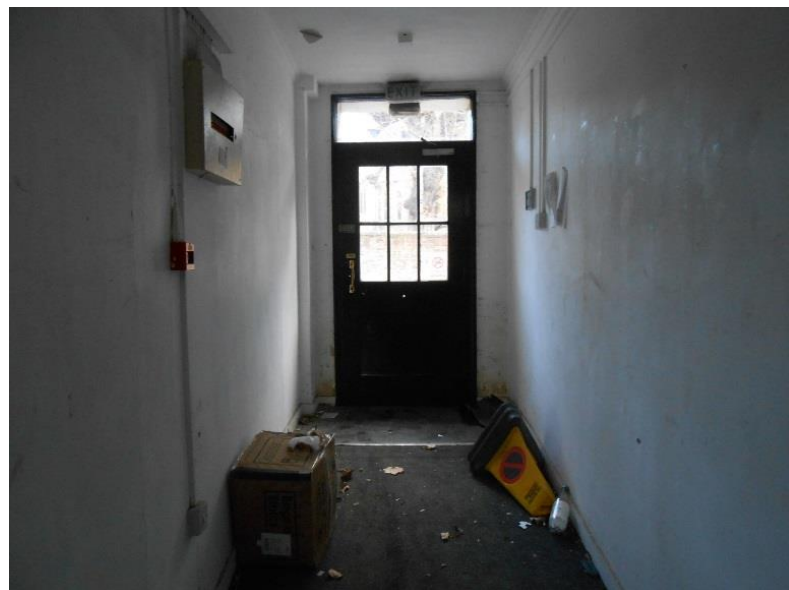


Figure13: The central front door leads into a narrow corridor

- 4.24 Some of the early timber frame has survived. Here and there this is visible but it is clear that portions of it have been cut through or covered up (Figure 14).



Figure 14: View showing the left hand 'shop' with exposed timber frame. Note the right hand wall is a modern insertion and there is likely to have been a fireplace (now removed) on the back wall (centre)

- 4.25 The room with the bay window is completely featureless except for a main timber supporting the floor above (Figure 15).



Figure 15: View into right hand 'shop' with single timber being the only feature apart from the window.

- 4.26 Access to the rear is at the end of the entrance corridor and to the west of this is the stair. Adjacent to the stairs up, are the stairs down to the basement. The large chimney forms the side wall of these stairs. All rooms behind the stairs and the east front room have been demolished.

- 4.27 On the first floor a small WC of no historic interest is accessed off the stairs behind the chimney. The two rooms at the front of the building have been opened up into one with two short nibs of walling retained to indicate the original subdivisions (Figure 16).



Figure 16: Front first floor rooms have been opened out.

- 4.28 These rooms retain some moulded cornices and low level panelling. The panelling in the western side of the room appears to be modern. A fireplace is also retained (Figure 17). The doorway into the original room survives but a further doorway which lead into the extension has been inserted to the left hand side of the fireplace.



Figure 17: View of eastern room with fireplace and original doorway on right. Left hand doorway is inserted.

- 4.29 The second floor has rooms which were always more simply decorated because in the hierarchy of rooms in Georgian period, these were of lower status and likely to be bedrooms. These too, however, have been altered. Few features remain other than the windows which incorporate Victorian sashes into the Georgian frames. However, there is a small Victorian fire

grate in the western room which has been inserted into the original Georgian fireplace (Figure 18) and some plainer panelling survives (Figure 19).



Figure 18: The Victorian fire grate set into the Georgian fire surround



Figure 19: The simple panelling

- 4.30 Externally, the front elevation is constructed in Flemish bond with vitrified headers creating a diaper work effect with tuck pointing. There is little alteration visible to the front elevation and it is likely that the 'shop' windows were inserted into the frontage in the 19th century. The cellar lightwell visible in Figure 7 has long since been infilled.

Architectural and Artistic significance

- 4.31 These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skills, like sculpture.
- 4.32 The building forms part of an important group of Georgian buildings in Gun Street many of which are listed and form part of the historic core of Reading set around St Mary's Church. The building is prominent within the street because its frontage retains much of its original domestic character despite the insertion of early 19th century shopfronts.
- 4.33 When considering the architectural and artistic qualities of the building, it is clear that it represents the qualities of a Palladian design. This was a style of Classical architecture that evolved from the work of the sixteenth-century architect Andrea Palladio. The style was revived in the early 18th century. The almost complete survival of the design externally, contributes to the architectural significance of the building.
- 4.34 The quality of the external brickwork is of note. Even in its day, it was an expensive use of brick in terms of the Flemish bond with carefully selected vitrified headers in combination with tuck pointing. This contributes to the artistic significance.

Summary of Significance

- 4.35 The property exhibits many of the key elements of a high quality, high status Palladian dwelling. The Classical features of Palladian revival architecture of the early 18th century survive including the plain frontage punctuated by an even spread of tall windows with exposed joinery pre-dating building laws of 1774 which required, for fire prevention purposes, that sash boxes be inserted entirely behind the brickwork. These windows demonstrate a hierarchy of rooms with those less important rooms being at the top. The sashes are Victorian set within the Georgian outer frames.
- 4.36 The property has a later pair of shop fronts on the ground floor which have been inserted on either side of the central doorway. Although the door is early, it does not appear to be original and may have been inserted with the shop windows.
- 4.37 Internally, the building has been adapted for office use with some of the original room divisions having been lost long ago. Others, such as on the ground floor, have been altered with the closing of doorways and creation of others. Despite this, some of the interior features survive including one or two fire surrounds, some skirting boards and cornices, architraves and some panelling although not all of this is contemporary with the house. Vestiges of a timber frame are visible indicating an earlier building on this site over which the Georgian house was constructed. The most significance remnant is found in the roof space.
- 4.38 The staircase is contained within its own structural tower at the back, but this appears to have been altered and 'weatherproofed' on the outside, and clues to it having been salvaged from elsewhere are to be found in the joinery itself. Nevertheless, it is of high quality and worthy of protection.
- 4.39 During its lifetime, the building has been extended at the rear. This extension appears to have retained the older building virtually intact despite having linkages through the back wall. Demolition of these later parts have led to the rear of the historic building being retained but much is exposed to the elements. Consequently, the condition of the building, having been empty for at least a decade, has led to infestation with vermin and deterioration of the structure. The building is vulnerable to further deterioration unless redevelopment of the site and conservation/repair of the main house is undertaken soon.

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5. The Proposal

- 5.1 For clarity, this section should be read in tandem with the proposed drawings. For many years it has been the ambition of the owners, who also own the neighbouring Purple Turtle bar to expand into 10 Gun Street and previous planning applications and permissions have concentrated on creating a larger club venue. Permission (ref: 151281) was granted for a scheme in 2016 and work started with the demolition of the redundant parts of the building. Since then, the market has changed, and the financial viability of the approved scheme has dwindled. The development stopped and the building remained empty.

- 5.2 The current scheme seeks to continue to re-use the building in conjunction with The Purple Turtle, but on a smaller scale and as a more flexible overall use. Simply put, this would involve having a coffee shop/restaurant use in the front of the building on the ground and first floors, and a venue to the rear catering for the establishment of a smaller club venue.
- 5.3 10 Gun Street would be linked to The Purple Turtle next door via the basement, and the basement would also contain customer toilets, storage and staff room (Figure 20). The original cellar would be retained at the front of the building, but a new extended basement level will be constructed to the rear. Linkage with the basement of The Purple Turtle would be in one location as shown.

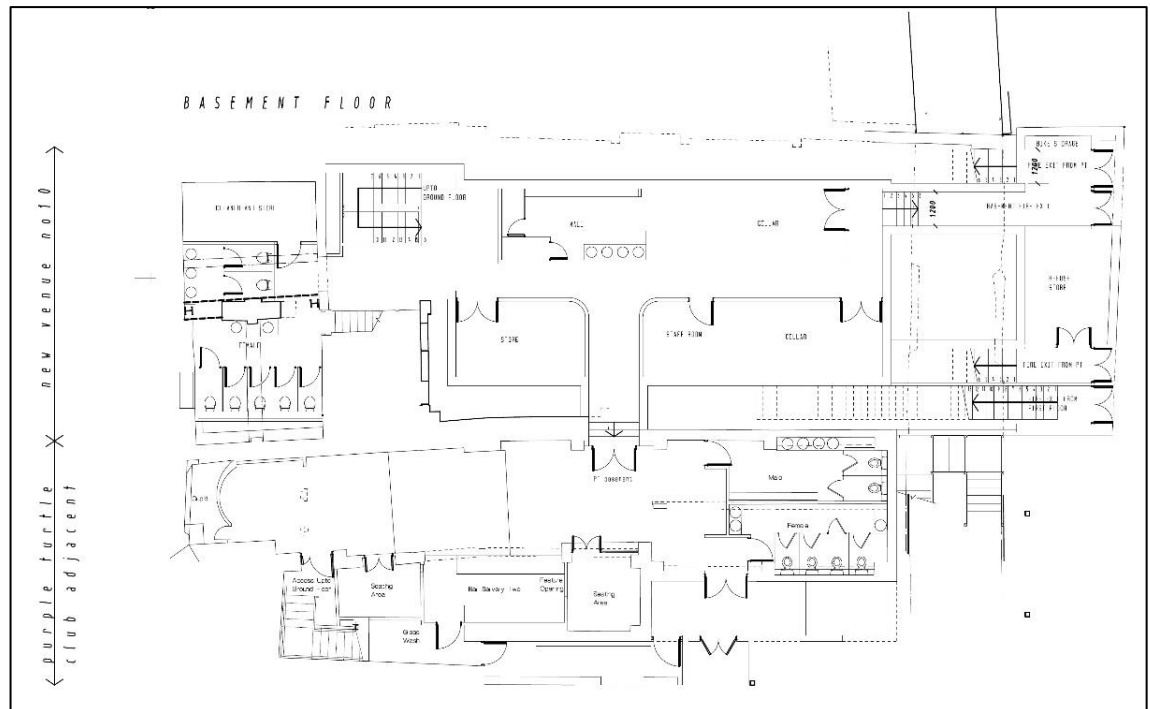


Figure 20: Proposed basement plan showing link to basement of The Purple Turtle and extended basement

- 5.4 The existing narrow staircase down to the cellar will be retained in situ but will not be used. The main access into the Female toilets will be via a new connection to be made in the back wall of the cellar. A new staircase will be constructed behind this to give access between the Ground and Basement levels (Figure 21).

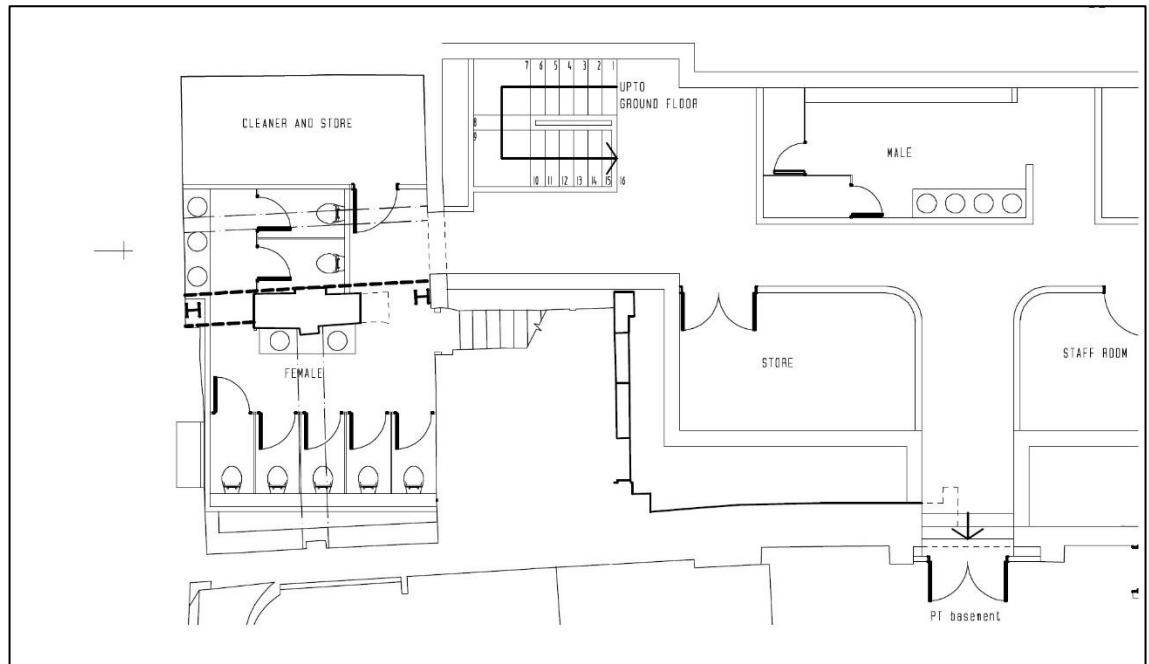


Figure 21: Extract of Basement plan to show new female WCs in existing basement and retention of old steps down to basement plus construction of new staircase behind basement

- 5.5 On the ground floor, it is proposed to open up the entrance to the rooms by removing the side walls of the entrance corridor creating a recessed front entrance re-using the existing door opening outwards (Figure 22). This was approved in the previous scheme, planning permission reference 151281.

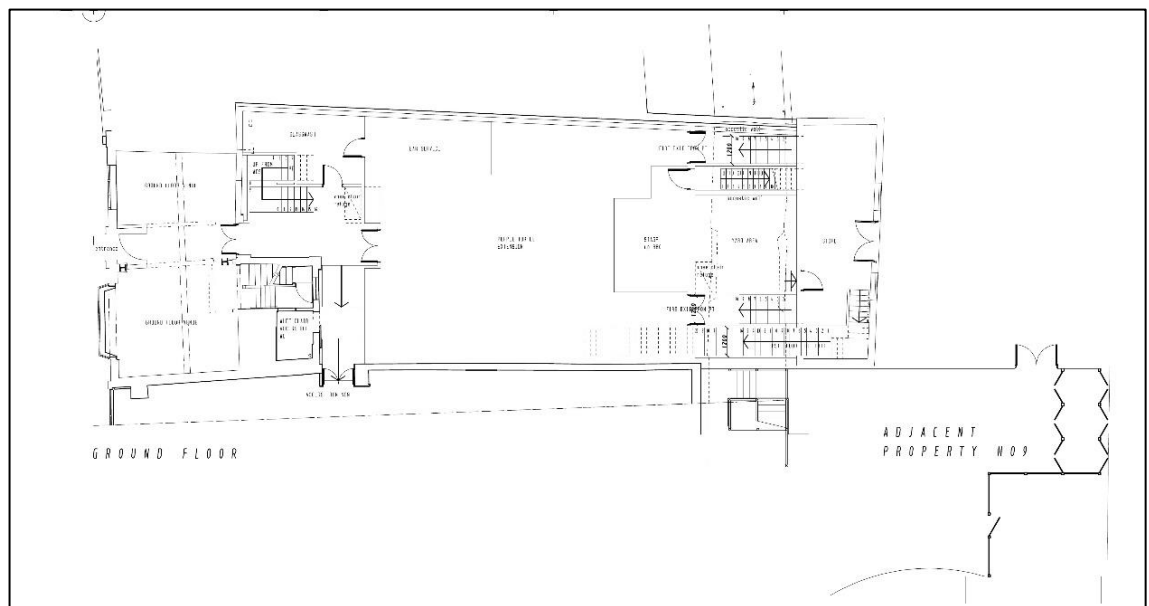


Figure 22: Proposed Ground Floor plan

- 5.6 The staircase will be retained in situ and conserved and redecorated. Between the first and second floors, the flight of stairs will open into an escape corridor which will extend over the new extension to the constructed behind the existing building (Figure 23). The old stairs will continue upwards to the second floor.

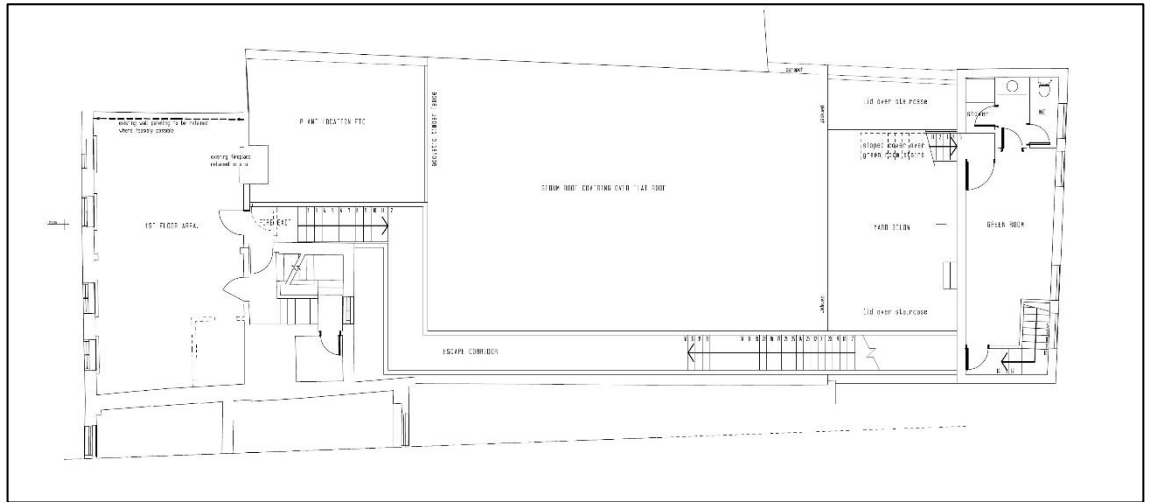


Figure 23: Proposed first floor plan

- 5.7 The two old rooms at the front are already combined into one room. Except for the removal of a small modern partition in the corner, there will need to be no changes to this room except for minor repair works and redecoration. The old fireplace and panelling will be retained.
- 5.8 There are no works to the second floor except for potential repairs if needed and redecoration.
- 5.9 Behind the old house, an extension will be constructed which will provide the main venue area. This will extend to the existing rear boundary wall but will be formed of elements of different heights. Directly behind the old building, there will be a two storey element plus the basement but this will leave the existing stair tower with its arched window standing proud of the walls of the new extension. The escape route will run over the flat roof element and down steps to the very rear of the site where there will be a new building visually separated from the main venue (Figure 24). This new three-storey building will contain storage on the ground and first floors and the 'Green' room on the top floor. A new yard level will be created to correspond with the new venue floor level. The yard is located over the Holy Brook which is culverted at this point.

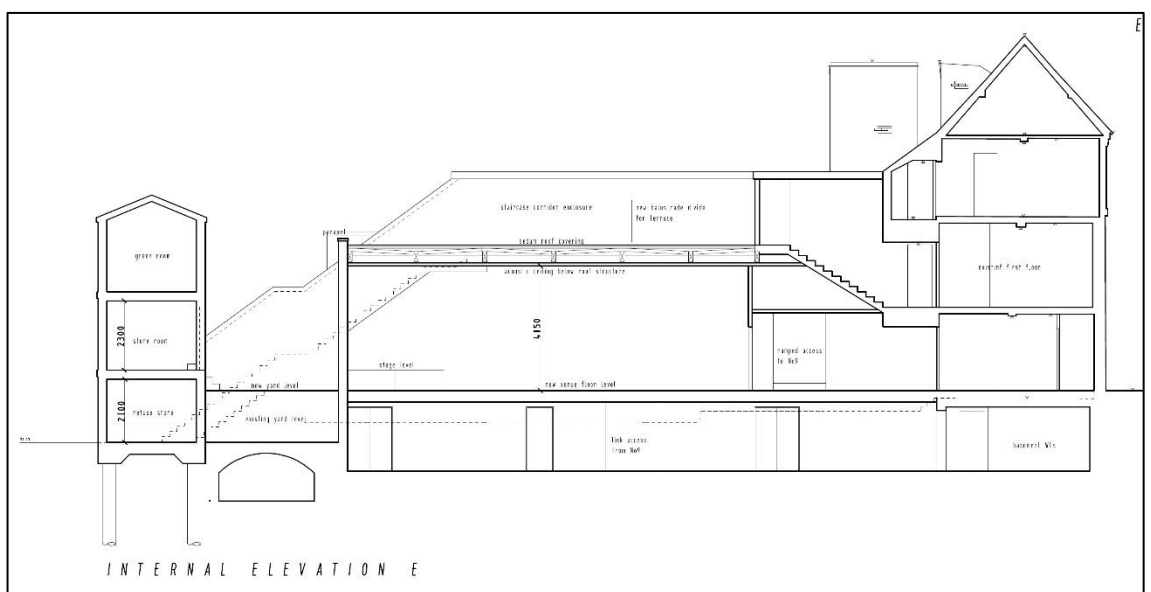


Figure 24: Section through proposed extension and old building

6. Assessment of Impact on significance

- 6.1 The new scheme is similar to the previously approved development proposals but reduces the overall size of the venue created. The impact on the historic building is very similar to the approved scheme. It should be taken into account that the building is continuing to deteriorate whilst it is un-used but the viability of the development means that the previous scheme needed to be reconsidered to create a use that is sustainable in light of the current commercial conditions.
- 6.2 In principle, re-use of the building in a way which does not harm the heritage interest is to be welcomed because a viable use justifies ongoing maintenance and conservation. Conversion works to bring about this use must, however, ensure that the building retains its heritage significance. The paragraphs above have set out the extent of that significance and have detailed what exists in terms of historic fabric today. The building has already seen the demolition of large portions on the rear which were of more modern construction and previously sanctioned through the planning process. What remains is the core of the 18th century building, but even this has already experienced a high degree of alteration in the decades before the current ownership.
- 6.3 Overall, the new use will bring some much needed life back to the site and will fully occupy all the rooms. The key elements of the historic architecture are to be retained. This includes the frontage albeit with a newly recessed doorway. At the rear, the historic roof form of the historic building will be retained and the stair tower, which is identified as a later alteration, will also be retained and repaired.
- 6.4 The full use and expansion of the basement has been agreed in previous schemes and although this element of the project will make considerable differences to the existing condition and appearance of the basement, this will not be a bad thing since it is in poor condition, damp and unusable at present. The existing basement had been dry lined previously and the floor has a concrete skim (Figure 25). The new access into the existing basement will not have any harmful effect on the building overall.
- 6.5 On the ground floor, the impact of the proposals are similar to those in the approved scheme but indicative layouts for the use of the front rooms are unhelpful as there is more flexibility than before. There will, however, be a clear demarcation between the old building and the foyer to the new with the installation of a pair of double doors into the existing opening.
- 6.6 Behind the old building, the new extension to provide a venue has less impact on the heritage significance of the building than the previous scheme because it is less bulky, and the appearance of the historic back wall and stair tower should be improved.
- 6.7 Overall, there are similar impacts on the historic building to the approved scheme. Loss of historic fabric is minimised, and the key historic architectural elements are retained. The new construction to the rear is smaller and more viable than previously approved.



Figure 25: The basement has already been altered.

7. Heritage Policy Implications

- 7.1 The proposal is consistent with heritage policies affecting these listed buildings and the conservation area and the setting of the adjacent listed buildings. The relevant policies are contained within the local authority development plan and government guidance for the conservation of heritage assets contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Local development Plan

- 7.2 Legislation instructs that applications should be determined in line with the Development Plan, or Local Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The existing local plan covering this area is The Reading Borough Local Plan which was adopted in November 2019 and covers the period up to 2036. The plan contains a section relating to Built and Natural Environment. This section recognises the value of historic features in contributing to a sense of place, as well as benefits to the economic vibrancy and vitality of the city.

7.3 EN1 – Protection and enhancement of the historic environment

Historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. This will include:

- **Listed Buildings;**
- **Conservation Areas;**
- **Scheduled Monuments;**
- **Historic parks and gardens; and**

- Other features with local or national significance, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and assets on the Local List.

All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. 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 will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings. ..etc

- 7.4 This is an overarching policy which reflects Government advice given in the National Planning Policy Framework. This proposal helps to protect and enhance the Borough's heritage assets by ensuring that the buildings are used intensely enough to justify their maintenance, and the conversion to a different use coupled with the modern extension to the rear could also add vitality to the commercial area in which it is located. This is conservation led development in practice and represents benefits to heritage as well as the economy. The proposals retain the historically important elements of the building and replaces those parts, already demolished, which contributed little to the heritage of the area. Architectural elements of heritage value are largely protected from harm. This proposal fully conforms to the requirements of this policy.

7.5 EN3 – Enhancement of Conservation Areas

The special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced. Development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. 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;
- Protecting and encouraging the maintenance of green spaces and important trees, particularly where they are intrinsic to the history and character of the area;
- Improving signage and street furniture;
- Restoring or re-establishing appropriate paving, railings or walls;
- Sympathetic landscaping and planting;
- Improving or restoring green spaces, including front gardens, that are appropriate to the historic interest of a Conservation Area;
- Signage that reveals and promotes the Conservation Area and its boundaries;
- Interpretation panels to inform the public of the area's historical significance.

Where a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan has been adopted for a particular Conservation Area, this will be a material consideration in determining applications for development.

- 7.6 This Heritage Statement sets out a clear understanding of the significance of the site and its contribution towards the character of the Conservation Area. The proposals are sensitive to that character and retain the frontage building almost intact. The extensions to the rear, now demolished, were of little or no heritage value and did not positively contribute to the character of the area. The proposed rear extension will be less bulky than previously approved but like its previous iteration, will have little overall impact on the character of the area. The rear roofscape and elevation of the remaining historic building will, however, be protected as part of the design proposal.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021

- 7.7 Of particular note is Chapter 16 of the NPPF. Paragraph 197 advises local planning authorities to take account of *“the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets...”*. The heritage asset in this instance includes the listed building and also conservation area as a whole. Implicit in the latter is the setting of listed buildings in the vicinity of the application site. The paragraphs above articulate the enhancements to the building in terms of finding a new, economically viable use, and the benefits that will have on retaining the historic structure. The extension to the rear will have little impact on the overall character of the area but will bring about a greater vibrancy to the area and will justify the continued maintenance of the heritage asset. The contribution towards the character of the conservation area will be retained and enhanced.

- 7.8 The conclusion above also complies with the aspirations of paragraph 199 of the NPPF which says 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 the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be)...”.

- 7.9 The principle of redevelopment of the site retaining the core heritage asset has already been accepted by the Local Planning Authority. It is only the form of the new construction which changes in this application. The heritage asset itself is retained without substantial alterations and its continued conservation and maintenance can be justified on economic grounds as well as heritage and cultural priorities. This would accord with the aims of the national guidance.
- 7.10 The proposal complies with local and national heritage policy. It is therefore considered that the proposal should be viewed favourably by the local planning authority.

8. Summary and Conclusion

- 8.1 The application results from a detailed understanding of the heritage value of the site including three listed building and the conservation area, and to a lesser extent, the setting of the surrounding listed buildings. Careful consideration of the principles of development has resulted in a well-thought out set of proposals that have minimal impact on the existing building. The extent and form of development has also been shaped by a recognition of the changing commercial environment in which the business will operate. Heritage priorities have taken the forefront in the re-design of the scheme and overall, the scheme should be regarded as making a positive contribution to the historic environment.
- 8.2 It is therefore politely requested that the local planning authority view the scheme favourably.