

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

App Ref: 221141/FUL and 221142/LBC

Address: 33 London Street

Proposal: External changes to the building including the glazing of the front door transom and installation of handrails following the removal of existing signs, lights and Christmas garland decorations (amended description)

Case Officer: Connie Davis

Extended Target Decision Date: 04/11/22

Site Description

The Great Expectations currently comprises a hotel situated at 33 London Street, Reading, RG1 4PS. The site sits just outside of the Central Core and Primary Shopping Area and lies within the Market Place/ London Street Conservation Area.

The building is situated at the junction of London Street and Queens Road and is neighboured by a 4-storey office block to the north and a 4-storey block of flats to the south.

The building was built in 1866 and has been Grade II listed since 1957. It is surrounded by several other listed buildings as well as those used for retail, offices and residential. The building is 3 storey in height, and the main façade comprises of large fluted columns and angle piers. The surrounding buildings are non-uniform in character and materials.

The Listing for the building is as follows:

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.

Proposal

Planning permission/ Listed Building Consent is sought for the following:

- Removal of existing 'Great Expectations' signage, lantern and Christmas garland decorations
- Installation of handrails to the front entrance of the building
- Glazing the transom of the front door

Information Submitted (for both applications):

P_00_G200_001 Rev A - Proposed - Ground Floor (Partial) Plan

Received 1st November 2022

E_01_G200_001 Rev B - Proposed - Front Elevation

Received 18th October 2022

Planning Statement

E_01_G200_002 - Existing - Front Elevation

P_00_G100_001 - Site Location + Block Plan

P_00_G200_002 - Existing Ground Floor (Partial) Plan

Application Form

CIL Form

Received 3rd August 2022

Relevant planning history

221498/ADV - Replacement logo on existing black signage boards - Application under consideration

071148/ADV - Retrospective application for advertising banner - Application Permitted

071073/LBC - Retrospective application for banner - Application Withdrawn

970585/ADV - Feature pub name sign and two facility sign boards - Application Permitted

970758/LBC - Front elevational treatment - Application Permitted

980311/ADV - Feature banner signs to front elevation - Application Refused

980438/ADV - Two feature Banner signs - Application Refused

Consultation

Internal

Conservation and Urban Design Officer - No objection to removal of modern additions, no objection to glazing of transom, objection to other proposals (see discussion with agent section of the report).

Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) - Support the application but object to the glazing of the upper part of the front door and have concerns about the lack of detail provided in relation to materials for the proposed handrail. There were no objections to the removal of existing signage. Considered further detail required on how holes and fixings from previous signage etc will be made good.

Comments were made on other elements of the proposal (iron railings, canopies - full details of which can be found in the CAAC consultation response) however these have now been omitted from the scheme and so will not be discussed. Comments on proposed advertisements are also not considered but can be submitted and considered by Officers under the associated advertisement consent application (ref. 221498/ADV).

The CAAC also advised other works have been carried out without Listed Building Consent. Officers have reminded the applicant of the requirement of Listed Building Consent for all works and this should be regularised if carried out without consent.

Public

Adjoining neighbours were advised of the applications via letter sent on 10/08/22. In addition, a site notice for both application was erected and notice placed in local paper. No comments have been received for either application.

Discussions with the applicant/ agent

During the course of the application, various elements of the proposal were omitted due to insufficient supporting information being submitted which demonstrated the proposal would not result in a harmful impact to the heritage asset. Namely awnings, glazing of the main front door, planting and railings were removed from the scheme.

Relevant planning policies and guidance

Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which states at Paragraph 11 “Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development”.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
National Planning Policy Guidance

Reading Borough Council Local Plan (2019)

CC7	Design and the Public Realm
CC8	Safeguarding Amenity
EN1	Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
EN3	Enhancement of Conservation Areas

Appraisal

The main issues to be considered are:

- a) Principle of Development

b) Design and impact on the Historic Environment

a) Principle of Development

There is no in-principle objection to works to the Listed Building, so long as such works are considered satisfactory from a design and heritage perspective. The existing signage, lantern and garland decorations are non original features, and therefore their removal would not be of adverse impact to the heritage asset, and the principle of their removal is accepted.

b) Design and impact on the Historic Environment

Given the removal of the signage, lantern and decorations is accepted in principle, the loss of these non-original features will not be discussed. Furthermore, the removal of these were accepted (and welcomed) by the Heritage consultant and the Conservation Area Advisory Committee. A condition will be applied ensuring that any 'making good' following the removal of these items will match the existing building. The removal of these features would also not result in any degrading of the surrounding conservation area.

In terms of the new additions, it needs to be identified as to whether these would result in any harm to the Listed Building/ Conservation Area. Paragraph 193 of the NPPF states 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). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance."* Paragraph 196 goes on to say that *"Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use."*

As such, the level of harm to the heritage asset needs to be assessed. If harm is identified, this needs to be outweighed by the public benefit of the scheme in order to be supported.

Transom

The original front door is referred to within the Listing of the building. The glazing of the transom will not require the removal of the door panels explicitly referred to in the Listing, although it is acknowledged that the alterations would result in "less than substantial harm" given the works relate to the door itself. Therefore, the public benefits of the scheme are required to be weighed against this harm. In this case, the conclusion reached is that while there is notably a small amount of public benefit, that the venue can re-brand and continue to contribute towards the Reading economy this is sufficient to outweigh the "less than substantial harm" identified and therefore the proposal can be accepted, as agreed by the RBC Conservation and Urban Design Officer.

The proposed materials (glazing) are considered complementary to the glazed frontage of the site. Full details of the glazing will be secured via condition.

Handrails

It is not considered that the proposed handrails would result in harm to the Listed Building, subject to suitable materials and ironmongery which will be secured via condition. This is

due to their modest scale, and narrow width, meaning they would be considered a non-intrusive feature on the protected front façade of the public house. Whilst there is not considered any harm (and so this element of the proposal does not need to be explicitly weighed against public benefits), it is worth noting that the handrails would make the site more accessible to members of the public and may improve health and safety levels when entering/ existing the site.

Neither the transom or handrails would be considered to result in harm to the overall setting of the conservation area due to being minor alterations.

The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in relation to Policies EN1 and EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Recommendation:

GRANT FUL planning permission subject to the following conditions:

1. Time Limit
2. Approved Plans
3. Transom and handrail materials to be submitted
4. Following the removal of the existing signage, external light and garland decorations, any works of making good shall match the existing original fabric in respect of using materials of a matching form, composition and consistency, detailed execution and finished appearance.

REASON: In order that the special architectural and historic interest of this Listed Building is safeguarded in accordance with Policy EN1 and EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Informatives:

1. Terms
2. Complaints about construction
3. Encroachment
5. Positive and Proactive
6. LBC and ADV required

GRANT LBC subject to the following conditions:

1. Time Limit
2. Approved Plans
3. Materials to be submitted
4. Following the removal of the existing signage, external light and garland decorations, any works of making good shall match the existing original fabric in respect of using materials of a matching form, composition and consistency, detailed execution and finished appearance.

REASON: In order that the special architectural and historic interest of this Listed Building is safeguarded in accordance with Policy EN1 and EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Informatives:

1. Terms

2. PP and ADV required
3. Positive and Proactive