

HERITAGE STATEMENT rev. 00

Purpose of the report: 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. A pre app consultation has also taken place with Historic England who have written in support of the proposals.

Heritage Asset and its Setting:

Project Address: 75-77 London Street, Reading, RG1 4QA

Conservation Area: Market Place/ London Street Conservation Area

Listing Status: Grade II*/ II

List entry no. 1156168

Building Use: Residential units to first and second floor with access from the ground floor. Redundant private function hall to the ground floor. Currently vacant.

Project Overview:

The demolition of the existing function room to the rear of the building (refer to Architects drawings). The reinstatement of the rear façade of the existing townhouse. The ground floor rear extension of the existing building in a manner to reflect the existing architecture. The reinstatement of some garden areas to the rear of the property. The new build of a 2 storey plus roof space set of flats in the space at the rear of the site accessed from East Street with views through to the Listed building. Conversion of the ground floor of the existing building into 3no. ground floor flats with garden access.



Photo 1 – Front Elevation

640 75-77 London Street, Reading, RG1 4QA



Photo 2 and 3 – Rear of the property looking towards the hall



Photos 4, 5 and 6 Rooftop views.



Photo 7 Interior view of the main hall.

Schedule of Intervention:

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

- Demolition of the rear Olympia Hall in its entirety and the reinstatement of the rear of the townhouse. There is limited evidence available for the former rear of the building prior to the existing extension so reinstatement has been based on evidence available on the adjacent building and the known architectural style of the building era.
- The rear gardens would be sympathetically landscaped and a new block of flats would be built behind accessed from East Street with associated landscaping, parking and cycle and bin stores. There would be views through the site to the rear of the Listed building.
- The conversion of the ground floor of the former townhouse section to 3no. residential units. A small ground floor extension with materials to match the existing to give a good level of habitable space with the built form based on the existing architectural style of the building.
- Not change to the overall London Street elevations apart from the removal of the signage associated with the previous venue use. Like for like repair of the existing timber sash windows as required.

Setting Overview:

The building sits along the wide street of London Street, a primary route historically into Reading town centre. The road is very much Georgian in its styling containing prestigious 3 storey brick townhouses. The property in question sits beside No.73 London Road which was built as a residence for Dr Anthony Addington who was famed to be the mental health specialist who attended the 'mad' King George III. No. 73 dates around 1748/9. No.75, and the building in question, was built slightly later to match in styling in around 1754 to house his patients. Each house is designed to be 5 bays wide using palladian proportions and is mentioned within the Pevsner 'Buildings of England'. At this time the rear of the property was laid to gardens. The townhouse has a traditional georgian parapet detail with a pitched slate roof behind.

To the rear of the building is an unusually large hall which first appears on the 1931 mapping. Built between 1912 and 1931 the building appears in a photo from 1914 referred to as the Olympia Dance Hall. There are a number of photos within the Reading Museum collection showing large scale gatherings being held at the venue from this period onwards. It is understood that the hall was built just before World War I as a venue for dances and functions.

The building extension to the rear has been used for a variety of large scale functions over the years and was extended to the East street side in 2007 to give the entrance a facelift. The rear hall has been refurbished a number of times internally as it changed hands. The outer envelope is presumably an uninsulated steel frame building with corrugated cement roof (presumably asbestos) with a single skin brickwork to the walls.



Photo dated 1914 from Reading Museum collection

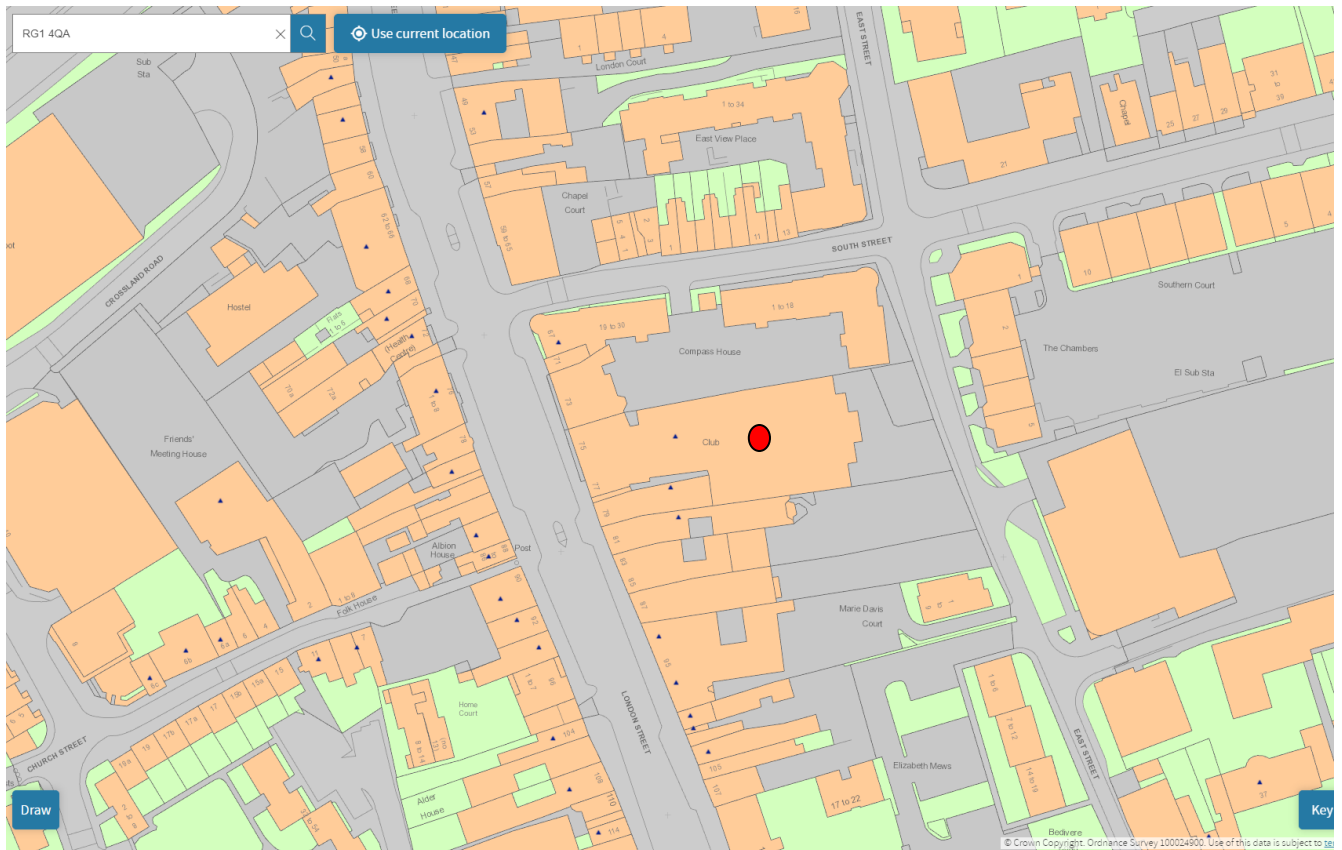
640 75-77 London Street, Reading, RG1 4QA



*Photograph 1- taken from the Reading Museum collection Dance at Olympia Ballroom, Reading
Photograph from Reading Chronicle Collection - September 1939*



*Photograph 2 - Evacuee Tea Party, Olympia, Reading
Photograph from Reading Chronicle Collection - November 1939*



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

Impacted Heritage Assets:

The building sits within the southern half of the Market Place/ London Street Conservation Area. The Conservation area Appraisal highlights the front of the building only as a portion of note.

The building is Grade II and Grade II* Listed as outlined below.

LONDON STREET 1. 5128 (East Side) Nos 73 and 75 SU 7173 SE 3/195 22.3.75. II GV 2. 1748, house of Dr Addington, physician to George III, father of the later Prime Minister. (Lead rainwater head with initials AM and date 1748 removed since previous list). An imposing pair of houses of the same general design. 3 storeys and basement. Stucco plinth, red brick, header bond. Painted stone string at 1st floor level, and painted stone cills to 1st and 2nd floor windows. Moulded and painted stone cornice, plain brick parapet with stone coping. Old tile roof, taller hipped part to left with shaped chimney. Glazing bar sash windows (No 75 has a vent now to 2nd floor left hand window), scalloped blind boxes to No 75. Central doors with stone steps (only No 73 retaining moulded nosing). No 73 has 6 panelled door with radiating fanlight over deep plain painted wood architrave with ovolo moulding. Moulded open pediment on half scroll fluted brackets with acanthus ornament, repeated at right angles on wall face. No 75 has double 6 panelled door with rectangular fanlight (oval and star glazing pattern); wood case with panelled reveals, architrave surround, plain frieze, moulded cornice and half scroll fluted brackets with acanthus ornament. Recently a further door has been inserted to left of No 75, smaller with isolated brackets (probably intended for a flat hood). C18 or early C19 ramped spearhead cast-iron railings with panel standards topped with small urns and segmental bar and ball across front of both houses. No 73 retains a pair of sphinx footscrapers. Interior of No 75 altered to cinema. No 73 has original staircase with fluted balusters and plaster panelling in principal rooms, hall and staircase. Flagged hall with black diamond corners. Rear altered.*

Listing NGR: SU7185373036

LONDON STREET 1. 5128 (East Side) Nos 77 and 79 SU 7173 SE 3/194 22.3.57. II GV 2. Mid C18. 3 storeys, symmetrical pair. Silver grey brick headers with red quoins and dressings. Stucco strings at 1st and 2nd floors. Moulded stucco cornice, part over No 19 replaced by string. Parapet, now with concrete coping. Modern tile, concealed roof. Glazing bar sash windows, 5 on upper floors. Paired doorways in centre with 4 panelled doors, rectangular fanlights (with rectangular glazing patterns) and plain wood surround with cornice on square console brackets, lost on No 77 (cinema).

Listing NGR: SU7185273024

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 a small possibility of below ground archaeology within this location however the area is understood to be outside the medieval portion of the town centre. This area of town is recorded to have started to have been developed primarily in the 18th century as the towns transportation links and industrialization occurred.

Historic:

The townhouse to the front, although a lesser citizen than no.73, is of high historical significance due to its associations with Dr Anthony Addington as a residence for his patients. Dr Anthony Addington was a physician with a particular specialism in insanity famed for his work with King George III when he first showed signs of mental decline.

The hall to the rear is of little aesthetic value from the exterior however it has high cultural value in Reading. Since its creation it has formed part of the social history of the Reading area playing host to many a large function or dance. Ball rooms were created for positive mental health and moral in WWI but dance halls really took off post war in the 1920s and by 1953 dance was a huge industry in the UK with up to 70% of couples were considered at the time to have met on the dance floor. In the 1950s the Olympia was famed for hosting famous music acts such as The Rolling Stones, The Who and Rod Stewart amongst many others. As dance halls they fell out of favour by the 1970s and many such as this one became nightclubs. Olympia was a common name for a dance hall or exhibition space inspired by the London Olympia opening in 1886 which gained further momentum again from the London 1908 Olympics. Towns across Britain wanted their own large function hall 'an Olympia hall' to illustrate their success as and meet the demands of the growing local population for large dance spaces.

Architectural or Artistic:

The townhouse to the front has a high architectural value contributing to the Georgian townhouse frontages along this part of London Street and is visually paired with no.73 contributing in a positive manner to the Georgian feel of this part of the Conservation Area.

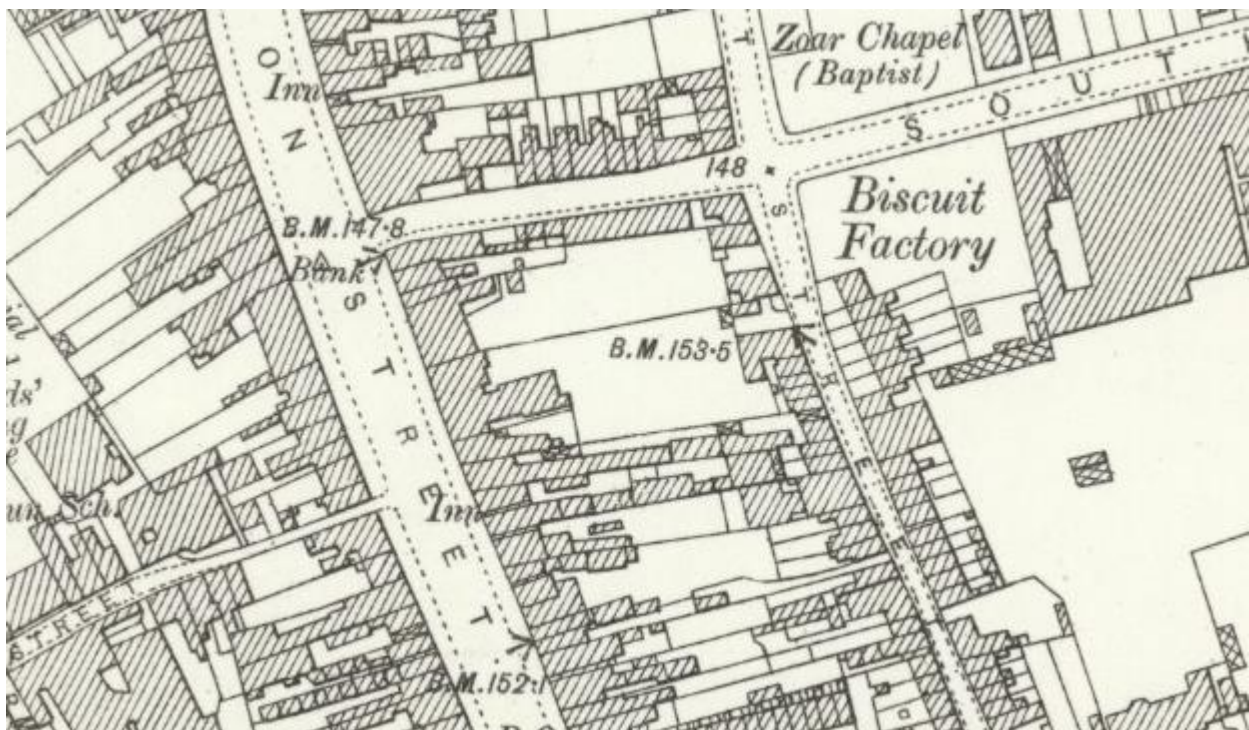
The hall to the rear of the site has a low aesthetic value and has a modern extension to the rear to create an additional entrance.

Historically the site had buildings addressing both London Street to the front and East Street to the rear,

Historic Mapping – For reference dating only, not for reproduction



Extract from OS Mapping dated 1875



Extract from OS Mapping 1898

640 75-77 London Street, Reading, RG1 4QA



Extract from OS Mapping 1909



Extract from OS Mapping 1931

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:

There are no proposed changes to the front London Street elevation so there is little or no impact upon the architectural or historical significance of the townhouse element of the building from its primary viewpoint.

To the rear of the site the change is significant removing the large scale Olympia Hall and opening up the rear of the property again, reintroducing a landscaped garden. There is historical precedent of an additional but separate building to the rear of the site accessed from East Street and this principle will be re-established.

Design development has occurred to ensure that the extension to the rear of the Listed building is limited in size to minimize impact however large enough to make the spaces of a good size for high quality investment. It is impossible to restore the original façade due to a lack of historical evidence however a sympathetic reinstatement of a façade suited to the original architectural styling is proposed.

The proposed new flat development has been developed in consultation with Historic England and allows views through to the Listed building and gardens. It also reinstates landscaped gardens behind the original property, something that overall enhances the setting of the historic building.

Internally:

The interior of the existing building is of a poor quality at ground floor level and subject to many modern interventions although some of the original room forms at the front can still be read. There will be no loss of historic detailing as part of the works and the new residential accommodation on the ground floor will be fitted out in a style to suit the Georgian period architecture of the building.

Scale and Massing:

There is no impact upon the scale and massing of existing architecture. The proposals impact on the rear of the building which cannot be seen from the main street frontage. The new extension responds well to the scale of the existing architecture.

The scale and massing at the rear of the building will be reduced despite the introduction of a new building. The new building is deliberately subservient in nature with its ridge height sitting below that of the original house. There are views through to the existing building allowing its form to be read from East Street.

Archeaology:

There is no below ground archaeology within the local area.

Use:

The proposals involve the change of use from the original design purpose of the building. The impact as a result will be substantial. The rear ballroom/ dance hall is clearly part of the buildings history and intertwined with many Reading family stories through its life. However it has no purpose, despite searching, and it being empty threatens the older original part of the building to the front in terms of fabric investment. An empty

building does not make a positive contribution to either the Listed Building itself nor to its setting. It cannot compete with the large hotels with regards to functions particularly due to parking and noise requirements so it is no longer fit for purpose. It is poorly insulated at present from both a thermal and sound perspective. The rear portion is also of poor aesthetic quality and in a poor condition needing extensive repairs to the roof. There are no funds to repair the building because it has no purpose.

The public benefit of bringing the Listed building back into use developing the property to a high standard outweighs any harm caused by the Change of Use.

Overall the impact of the development is sympathetic in nature responding to the historical context despite the need for a change of use.

Pre App Consultation:

A lengthy pre app consultation was undertaken with Historic England to ensure that the design developed in a sympathetic and supported manner. Emphasis was placed upon ensuring that the benefit of the proposals significantly outweighed any loss of cultural value on the site.

Their positive response was as follows:

'Following extended consultation, we consider that the latest iteration, illustrated on revision G of The Keen Partnership's drawings No. 9018, has succeeded in positively addressing our initial heritage concerns for the redevelopment of the Olympia Hall's site, while retaining the overall intentions of the original proposals. As previously envisaged, the rear elevation of 75-77 London Street would be repaired and extended at ground floor level to accommodate three residential units with private gardens. However, the footprint of the extension has now been beneficially reduced in depth and its building line designed as an offset of the existing.

Reinstated communal gardens in a section of the cleared Olympia Hall's area, would provide screening to the extension, while focussing views to the more significant repaired/reinstated upper levels above the proposed first-floor balcony guarded by appropriate Georgian-style railings.

The redevelopment of the substantial area resulting from the proposed demolition of the Olympia Hall, originally saw the erection of a stark contemporary and bulky four-storey residential block centred on the rear elevation of the listed buildings. This proposal has now been replaced by a more sympathetic scheme including two smaller blocks of lowrise vernacular-style houses located along the eastern and western site boundary, hinting to proportions and character of original mews property. A reduced number of carparking bays (six instead of nine) screened by trees and shrubs would be located behind and next to the existing masonry wall enclosing the separately-owned parking area fronting East Street.

The reduction in massing and scale and the formation of a wide central pathway would open up important views and provide a visual corridor for the appreciation of the rear elevation of the Georgian houses and their reinstated gardens. This would result in a significant improvement of the current street-scene along East Street, where historical gardens have been replaced by car parking and mediocre modern development, adversely impacting its original character and appearance.

In conclusion, the proposed repairs of the Georgian houses and the provision of sympathetic development within their setting would result in an enhancement of the significance of the listed buildings and of the currently neglected character and appearance of the conservation area. In our view, the identified heritage and public benefits would justify the loss of the aesthetically mediocre but locally-valued Olympia Hall.

On this basis, we consider that, overall, the proposals would meet the requirements of paragraphs 200 and 206 of the National Policy Framework (NPPF 2021). We recommend, however, paying attention to quality of materials and detailing for the repair/reinstatement of existing fabric and for the new development to ensure that these are appropriate and sympathetic to the historical character of the listed building and conservation area.

In particular, the masonry on the rear elevation of the listed houses includes a modern cement-rendered area. It would be beneficial to remove this inappropriate coating and expose the concealed brickwork to provide a consistent appearance to the rear elevation. However, the proposed intervention is subject to the establishment of the current condition of the brickwork, as the render removal may cause significant and more harmful structural damage.

We consider your proposals have now reached a stage where they address any heritage considerations we may have. However, we recommend paying attention to the choice of materials and detailed design, as outlined above, in order for the proposed development to succeed in effectively and sympathetically requalifying the surrounding environment, as currently envisaged.'

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 proposed works are necessary to ensure the long term survival of a Listed building finding new purpose after a lengthy period of being vacant.

The proposals are respectful in relation to the material palette used and the location of proposed works having been carefully developed with Historic England. The scale and massing of the new proposals are sympathetic and respond to that in the local area.

The cultural loss of the Olympia Hall has been outweighed by the quality investment in both the existing building and the site as a whole.

The proposals act in accordance with the requirements of the local authority as well in accordance with Historic England development guidelines and policies.

Assessor Details:

Surveyor: Michelle Purnell BA(hons) BArch RIBA MSc Building Conservation IHBC

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