

LED Screen, Reading Station
Heritage Statement
October 2022

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Report

Heritage Statement

Site

Reading Station Pedestrian Area, Station Approach

Date

October 2022

Planning Authority

Reading Borough Council

Site Centred At

SU71474 73767

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Final

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Executive Summary

This Heritage Statement considers land in the central part of the pedestrian area located to the south of Reading Station (the subject site) and the potential impact of the proposed minor alterations to the existing digital screen on the setting and significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets located in its vicinity.

In accordance with Paragraph 194 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2021) and policies CC7: Design and the Public Realm and EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment of the *Reading Borough Local Plan* (RBLP adopted 2019), this report first identifies and describes the historical development of the subject site and outlines the significance of the heritage assets before going on to consider the impact of the proposal on that significance.

There are no listed buildings located within the subject site nor is it located in a Conservation Area.

There are a number of listed buildings located in the vicinity of the site; the nearest being Reading Station Main Building (Grade II listed, Historic England UID 1321892) located to the north; the Statue of King Edward VII (Grade II listed, Historic England UID 1113589) located to the southeast, Great Western House (Grade II listed, Historic England UID 1113591), numbers 13 and 15 Station Road (Grade II listed, Historic England UID 1113590), which are located to the southeast, Walter Parsons Corn Stores, 10 Forbury Road (Grade II listed, Historic England UID 1248738) located to the southeast. The subject site does not contain any Locally Listed Buildings (non-designated heritage assets). Given that the proposals consist of a minimal amount of alteration to the structure of the existing screen and combined with the fact that the location of the screen will not change, it is considered that the proposals will not generate any adverse harm to the settings and significance of those heritage assets that have been identified.

The proposals have the potential to impact the setting and significance of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. However, given the location of the existing screen, a substantial distance from the north-western boundary of the Conservation Area designation, it is considered that there will be no harm to the setting of the heritage asset.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Heritage Statement considers land in the central part of the pedestrian area located to the south of Reading Station (Figure 1). The site (hereafter referred to as the 'subject site') is located at grid reference SU 71474 73767.
- 1.2 In accordance with the Paragraph 194 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2021) and the requirement for applicants to describe the significance of heritage assets including contribution to setting, the report draws together available information on designated and non-designated heritage assets. The assessment includes the results of a site survey (13 September 2022), an examination of published and unpublished records, charts historic land-use through a map regression exercise and considers relevant local and national policy and guidance.
- 1.3 The Historic Environment Record has been consulted and the relevant designated heritage assets located in the vicinity are identified in Figure 2.
- 1.4 The report enables relevant parties to assess the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets in the vicinity of the site, thus enabling potential impacts on these assets to be identified along with the need for design solutions.

Location and Topography

- 1.5 The subject site is located within the pedestrian area on the south side of Reading Station. Station Hill is located to the west with Blagrove Street and Station Road located to the southeast. The wider area is characterised by a mix of tall buildings and more modestly scaled buildings, with the latter including the listed two-storey former station building. The terrain is relatively flat in the immediate vicinity of the subject site but slopes down to the west. The subject site currently contains the existing digital display screen.

Relevant planning history

- 1.6 Advertisement Consent was granted on 28 June 2018 for a double-sided LED digital smart screen. Condition 3 states that the advertisement shall be removed no later than 5 years from the date of the consent i.e. by 23 June 2023.

2.0 Planning Background and Development Plan Framework

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

2.5 The *Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* sets out broad policies and obligations relevant to the protection of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas and their settings.

2.6 Section 66(1) states:

In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

2.7 Section 69 of the Act requires local authorities to define as conservation areas any *areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance* and Section 72 gives local authorities a general duty to pay special attention to *the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area* in exercising their planning functions. These duties are taken to apply only within a Conservation Area. The Act does not make specific provision with regard to the setting of a Conservation Area, that is provided by the policy framework outlined below.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

2.8 Government policy in relation to the historic environment is outlined in Section 16 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF), entitled *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*. This provides guidance for planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on the conservation and investigation of heritage assets. Overall, the objectives of Section 16 of the NPPF can be summarised as seeking the:

- Delivery of sustainable development;
- understanding the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits brought by the conservation of the historic environment;
- conservation of England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance; and
- recognition of the contribution that heritage assets make to our knowledge and understanding of the past.

2.9 Section 16 of the NPPF recognises that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term.

- 2.10** Paragraph 194 states that planning decisions should be based on the significance of the heritage asset, and that the level of detail supplied by an applicant should be proportionate to the importance of the asset, and should be no more than sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal upon the significance of that asset.
- 2.11** *Heritage Assets* are defined in Annex 2 as: a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage assets include designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
- 2.12** *Designated Heritage Assets* comprise: World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Protected Wreck Sites, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields and Conservation Areas.
- 2.13** *Significance* is defined as: the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. This interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.
- 2.14** *Setting* is defined as: the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.
- 2.15** The NPPF is supported by the *National Planning Policy Guidance* (NPPG). In relation to the historic environment, paragraph 18a-001 states that:
- Protecting and enhancing the historic environment is an important component of the National Planning Policy Framework's drive to achieve sustainable development (as defined in Paragraphs 6-10). The appropriate conservation of heritage assets forms one of the 'Core Planning Principles'.*
- 2.16** Paragraph 18a-002 makes a clear statement that any decisions relating to Listed Buildings and their settings and Conservation Areas must address the statutory considerations of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*, as well as satisfying the relevant policies within the National Planning Policy Framework and the Local Plan.
- 2.17** Paragraph 18a-013 outlines that the assessment of the impact of a proposed development on the setting of a heritage asset needs to take into account and be proportionate to the significance of the asset being considered, and the degree to which the proposed development enhances or detracts from the significance of the asset and the ability to appreciate the significance.

2.18 The NPPG outlines that although the extent and importance of setting is often expressed in visual terms, it can also be influenced by other factors such as noise, dust and vibration. Historic relationships between places can also be an important factor stressing ties between places that may have limited or no intervisibility with each other. This may be historic as well as aesthetic connections that contribute or enhance the significance of one or more of the heritage assets.

2.19 Paragraph 18a-013 concludes:

The contribution that setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset does not depend on there being public rights or an ability to access or experience that setting. This will vary over time and according to circumstance. When assessing any application for development which may affect the setting of a heritage asset, local planning authorities may need to consider the implications of cumulative change. They may also need to consider the fact that developments which materially detract from the asset's significance may also damage its economic viability now, or in the future, thereby threatening its on-going conservation.

2.20 The key test in NPPF paragraphs 199-202 is whether a proposed development will result in substantial harm or less than substantial harm. However, substantial harm is not defined in the NPPF. Paragraph 18a-017 of the NPPG provides additional guidance on substantial harm. It states:

What matters in assessing if a proposal causes substantial harm is the impact on the significance of the heritage asset. As the National Planning Policy Framework makes clear, significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. Whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision taker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the policy in the National Planning Policy Framework. In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset's significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed.

2.21 Paragraph 202 of the NPPF outlines that where a proposed development results in less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, the harm arising should be weighed against the public benefits accruing from the proposed development. Paragraph 18a-020 of the NPPG outlines what is meant by public benefits:

Public benefits may follow from many developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental progress as described in the

National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraph 7). Public benefits should flow from the proposed development. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and should not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits.

2.22 Paragraph 203 states:

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 affect directly or indirectly 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.

2.23 In considering any planning application for development, the planning authority will be mindful of the framework set by government policy, in this instance the NPPF, by current Development Plan Policy and by other material considerations.

Local Planning Policy

2.24 The *Reading Borough Local Plan* (RBLP adopted November 2019) is the relevant development plan. The RBLP 2019 contains a number of relevant policies including **Policy EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment**, which requires that new development conserves and enhances the Borough's built heritage and its settings.

2.25 *Policy EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment* states:

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.

Applications which affect Historic Parks and Gardens will safeguard features which form an integral part of the special character or appearance of the park or garden. Development will not detract from the enjoyment, layout, design, character, appearance, features or setting of the park or garden, key views out from the park, or prejudice its future restoration.

Applications which affect, or have the potential to affect, the significant features of heritage assets should be justified by a Heritage Statement.

The Council will monitor buildings and other heritage assets at risk through neglect, decay or other threats, proactively seeking solutions for assets at risk including consideration of appropriate development schemes that will ensure the repair and maintenance of the asset, and, as a last resort, using its statutory powers.

Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect or of damage to a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

2.26 Policy CC7: Design and the Public Realm of the RBLP 2019 is also relevant to the proposal given that it deals with local distinctiveness and ensuring high quality design. The policy states:

Policy CC7: Design and the Public Realm

All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, including: -

- *Layout: urban structure and urban grain;*
- *Landscape;*
- *Density and mix;*
- *Scale: height and massing; and*
- *Architectural detail and materials*

will be assessed to ensure that the development proposed makes a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives: -

- *Character - a place with its own identity and sense of place*
- *Continuity and enclosure*
- *Quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping*

- *Ease of movement and permeability*
- *Legibility - clear image and easy to understand*
- *Adaptability – capable of adaptation over time*
- *Diversity – meets a wide range of needs.*

Developments will also be assessed to ensure that they: -

- *Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;*
- *Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;*
- *Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them, including providing suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily;*
- *Are visually attractive as a result of good high quality-built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.*

Applications for major developments, or other relevant developments, should be accompanied by a design and access statement that deals with all the above matters.

2.27 The RBLP 2019 also provides guidance and information relating to the installation of advertisements. The relevant part of **Policy OU4: Advertisements**, states:

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;

Supplementary Planning Guidance

2.28 The Reading Station Area Framework Supplementary Planning Document (Station SPD 2010) contains guidance on new development and its potential impact on heritage assets identified in the vicinity of the station complex. Of particular relevance to the current proposal is Chapter 12: Heritage which anticipates alterations to the setting of the station. This document is a material consideration when proposing any form of new development that potentially would impact the heritage assets identified.

Historic Environment Good Practice Advice In Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (Historic England 2015)

2.29 The purpose of this document is to provide information to assist local authorities, planning and other consultants, owners, applicants and other interested parties in implementing historic environment policy in the NPPF and NPPG. It outlines a six-stage process to the assembly and analysis of relevant information relating to heritage assets potentially affected by a proposed development:

- Understand the significance of the affected assets;
- Understand the impact of the proposal on that significance;
- Avoid, minimise and mitigate impact in a way that meets the objectives of the NPPF;
- Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance;
- Justify any harmful impacts in terms of the sustainable development objective of conserving significance and the need for change; and
- Offset negative impacts on aspects of significance by enhancing others through recording, disseminating and archiving archaeological and historical interest of the important elements of the heritage assets affected.

Historic Environment Good Practice Advice In Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England 2017)

2.30 Historic England's Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 provides guidance on the management of change within the setting of heritage assets.

2.31 The document restates the definition of setting as outlined in Annex 2 of the NPPF. Setting is also described as being a separate term to curtilage, character and context; while it is largely a visual term, setting, and thus the way in which an asset is experienced, can also be affected by noise, vibration, odour and other factors. The document makes it clear that setting is not a heritage asset, nor is it a heritage designation, though land within a setting may itself be designated. Its importance lies in what the setting contributes to the significance of a heritage asset.

2.32 The Good Practice Advice Note sets out a five-stage process for assessing the implications of proposed developments on setting:

1. Identification of heritage assets which are likely to be affected by proposals;

2. Assessment of whether and what contribution the setting makes to the significance of a heritage asset;
3. Assessing the effects of proposed development on the significance of a heritage asset;
4. Maximising enhancement and reduction of harm on the setting of heritage assets; and
5. Making and documenting the decision and monitoring outcomes

2.33 The guidance reiterates the NPPF in stating that where developments affecting the setting of heritage assets results in a level of harm to significance, this harm, whether substantial or less than substantial, should be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme.

3.0 Historical Context and Location of Heritage Assets

Introduction

- 3.5** The following section presents a brief historical development of the site using publicly available background reports and the results of a map regression exercise.
- 3.6** The location of designated and non-designated heritage assets within and surrounding the site are also discussed below; these are shown in Figure 2.

Historical Background

- 3.7** The origins of the current settlement of Reading can be traced back to Saxon times. There is also archaeological evidence that people have been present in the area from as early as the Palaeolithic (or the Old Stone Age) period. The Borough's rich archaeological interest and many listed buildings provide a pointer to Reading's lengthy history. This includes its importance as a medieval settlement, and the increasing status of the town in the eighteenth century with the canalisation of the Kennet, and again in the nineteenth century with the arrival of the railway and subsequent industrial expansion.
- 3.8** The first Reading rail station was opened on 30 March 1840 as the temporary western terminus of the original line of the Great Western Railway. As built, Reading station was a typical Brunel-designed single-sided intermediate station. The Great Western Hotel (now Great Western House), located to the southeast of the station on the corner of Blagrove Street and Station Road was completed in 1844. In 1860, a new station building, constructed in Bath Stone and incorporating a tower and clock was completed for the Great Western Railway (existing Three Guineas public house). In 1898, the single sided station was replaced by a conventional design with the platforms linked by a pedestrian subway.
- 3.9** In 1989, a new station concourse was completed, which included a shopping arcade at its western end. The then station facilities in the circa 1860s station building were converted to the Three Guineas public house (current use). The station was further regenerated following a government investment programme to improve rail traffic flow at Reading, which was completed in 2014. This included new footbridge on the western side of the station and public realm improvements on the south side of the station, such as the pedestrianisation of a large area.
- 3.10** The site is located within the pedestrianised area to the south of Reading station, as shown in Figure 1.

Map Regression Exercise

- 3.11** Ordnance Survey mapping from 1879 onwards shows that the site has remained undeveloped (Figures 3 to 7).

Heritage Assets

- 3.12** There are no listed buildings located within the subject site nor is it located within a Conservation Area. There are no Registered Parks and Gardens either within the site or in its immediate surrounding.
- 3.13** There are a number of listed buildings located in the immediate vicinity of the site as follows:
- Reading Station Main Building (Grade II listed, Historic England UID 1321892) located to the north of the subject site.
 - Statue of King Edward III (Grade II listed, Historic England UID 1113589) located to the southeast of the subject site.
 - Great Western House (Grade II listed, Historic England UID 1113591), located to the southeast of the subject site.
 - numbers 13 and 15 Station Road (Grade II listed, Historic England UID 1113590), which are located to the southeast of the subject site.
 - Walter Parsons Corn Stores, 10 Forbury Road (Grade II listed, Historic England UID 1248738) located to the southeast of the subject site.
- 3.14** The subject site does not contain any Locally Listed Buildings (non-designated heritage assets).
- 3.15** The locations of the above are shown in Figure 2 (note that this map only identifies listed buildings and conservation areas located in the vicinity of the subject site and not the wider area).
- 3.16** The subject site does not contain any Locally Listed Buildings (non-designated heritage assets) nor are there any in the immediate vicinity.

Market Place/London Street Conservation Area

- 3.19** The Market Place/London Street Conservation Area is located a substantial distance to the southeast of the subject site. Therefore, the proposed development has limited potential to impact on the setting and significance of the Conservation Area.
- 3.20** The northern half of this linear conservation area contains the site of the town's medieval marketplace, now known as Market Place. Immediately to the east is Forbury Gardens, the site of the outer precinct of Reading Abbey, which is now a public park (Grade II listed on Historic England's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens). The *Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal* for the area (MPCAA) outlines the important qualities that

contribute to its significance and provides design guidance to assist in managing future changes and to ensure that the existing identity of the town's buildings and landscape are integral in new design. The Conservation Area comprises four-character areas of which Area 4: Market Place and environs of St. Laurence's Church and Town Hall including part of Blagrove Street and The Forbury are most relevant to the proposal. The distinctive characteristics identified for this Character Area are as follows:

Character Area 4: Features that make a positive contribution to the historic character and appearance of the conservation area:

- *The close proximity of St Laurence's Church and Town Hall buildings makes a strong architectural statement;*
- *St Laurence's Church and distinctive tower;*
- *The large public open space (part-pedestrianised) composed of Market Place and the area around the statue of Queen Victoria;*
- *Town Hall complex comprising Victoria Hall, Concert Hall, Town Hall and Museum, Library and Art Gallery;*
- *The collection of historic buildings looking onto Market Place;*
- *The monument in Market Place, designed by Sir John Soane in 1804 to commemorate Edward Simeon a mayor of Reading and Governor of the Bank of England, and the statue of Queen Victoria;*
- *Good views of Town Hall clock tower and the tower of St Laurence's Church;*
- *Trees, greenery and open space of St Laurence's churchyard;*
- *Trees in the public realm which soften the harsh urban townscape;*
- *Natural stone kerbs.*

3.21 The importance of key views of the Conservation Area is also recognised as notable landmarks are identified, which include the tower of St. Laurence's Church. The tower looks over both Market Place and Town Hall Square. The setting of the Conservation Area in relation to the subject site is an important factor in considering any proposal.

4.0 Proposed Development and Potential Impact on Heritage Assets

Subject Site

- 4.5** The subject site is located within the pedestrian area on the south side of Reading Station. Station Hill is located to the west with Blagrove Street and Station Road located to the southeast. The wider area is characterised by a mix of tall buildings and more modestly scaled buildings, with the latter including the original two-storeys former station building. The terrain is relatively flat in the immediate vicinity of the subject site but slopes down to the west. The subject site contains an existing LED screen.

The Proposed Development

- 4.6** The proposals are for the upgrading of the existing LED screen, which would include modifying the base structure and replacing the existing 10mm digital screen tiles with more energy efficient 6mm screen tiles. The existing screen measures 8 metres wide by 4 metres high with a 0.3 metres wide frame to its perimeter. The base of the screen sits 2.4 m above ground level and is mounted on a centrally placed support stand.
- 4.7** Advertisement Consent was granted for the existing screen on 28 June 2018 for a double-sided LED digital smart screen. Condition 3 states that the advertisement shall be removed no later than 5 years from the date of the consent i.e. by 23 June 2023.
- 4.8** The new proposed screen is an upgrade to the existing and is not considered to present any noticeable change in appearance or design. The scale and location of the existing structure will remain as previously approved and implemented.
- 4.9** It is noted that the luminance of the LED screen is controlled by a sophisticated sensor system to ensure that it can be seen comfortably during the day but that luminance levels will drop to low levels in the evenings, to minimise light spillage and glare. The luminance levels and hours of operation will remain as previously approved.
- 4.10** The proposal is illustrated in the following architectural drawing and plan prepared by BPM Architectural Services in September 2002:

- Plan, Elevation and Details (numbered 02).

Potential Impacts on Listed Buildings in Vicinity

- 4.7** As noted in paragraph 3.9, there are a number of listed buildings located in the vicinity of the subject site. The proposal, therefore, has the potential to impact on the settings and significance of the listed buildings identified. Due to the placement of the existing digital screen and the location of other

nearby listed buildings, it is considered that there would be no adverse harm associated with the proposal on their settings and significance and this is discussed in more detail below.

- 4.8** By virtue of their designation as listed buildings, those identified in the vicinity of the subject site are a nationally important component of the historic environment resource. In this context, they are good examples of building typologies within the centre of Reading, which retain much of their architectural integrity. There is also historical significance attached to them in terms of the part they played in the early development of the town centre.
- 4.9** In order to understand how the proposal could affect the significance of these heritage assets, it is important to understand the specific heritage values which combine to inform that significance. An understanding of the contribution setting makes to its significance is also considered.
- 4.10** Note that numbers 13 and 15 Station Road and the Walter Parsons Corn Stores (located at 10 Forbury Road) are considered to be of sufficient distance from the proposal that their settings would not be directly impacted by it. Therefore, a more detailed discussion has not been provided for these heritage assets.

Circa 1860s Building: Reading Station

Description and Setting

- 4.11** The former Main Building of Reading Station was constructed to the designs of architect Mr Lane (Chief Engineer of the Great Western Railway Company) circa 1865-67. This was part of the enlargement and remodelling of Brunel's original station of circa 1840. The principal south elevation to the 1860s building comprises a symmetrical frontage of two-storeys with centrally placed Italianate tower at roof level. The materials palette combines Coalbrookdale buff brick with Bath stone dressings and rusticated quoin details. The building is considered to be of architectural and historical significance. Following the completion of a new station concourse in 1989, which included a shopping arcade at its western end, the then station facilities in the circa 1860s station building were converted to the Three Guineas public house.
- 4.12** The principal south elevation fronts a large pedestrianised area, with Blagrove Street and Station Road located to the southeast. The largely open pedestrianised area ensures that the principal façade is visible in views from the corner of Blagrove Street and Station Road, in particular. Views along Station Hill looking east and northeast are more oblique, given the presence of a circa 2014 footbridge and the fall in terrain adjoining the entrance to this structure. The circa 1860s building is largely concealed in views from the

eastern end of Blagrove Street, given that the presence of the circa 1989 station concourse.

Impact of Development Proposals

- 4.13** While it is recognised that the existing digital screen is noticeable in views of the listed former Station building, its location has been well considered in this context. In this regard, the existing screen is positioned so that it reads against the backdrop of the circa 2014 footbridge addition at the western end of the station and ensures that the screen does not impede the key views of the heritage asset from the western end of Blagrove Street looking northwest, in particular (Plate 1 and Plate 2). It is also important to note that the screen is obscured in other views, such as that from the northern end of Station Road, given the presence of Thames House (Plate 3). To the southwest of the station the terrain falls away beyond the entrance to the 2014 footbridge addition (i.e. Station Hill), which combined with the orientation of the screen (facing southeast), lessens its prominence when read against the listed former Station building.
- 4.14** It is also noted that the existing digital screen and the proposed replacement are controlled by a sophisticated sensor system to ensure that it can be seen comfortably during the day but that luminance levels will drop to low levels in the evenings. This assists in minimising the potential impact that light spillage has on the heritage asset, particularly at night.
- 4.15** While the existing digital screen is noticeable within the immediate setting of the listed Station building, the proposals consist of minimal alteration to the base of the existing structure, and it is therefore not considered that these alterations will cause any adverse harm to the asset.



Plate 1 View from western end of Blagrove Street showing the existing digital screen (arrowed) and location in relation to the Grade II listed former Station building (centre right of the image) and the Grade II listed statue of Edward VII.

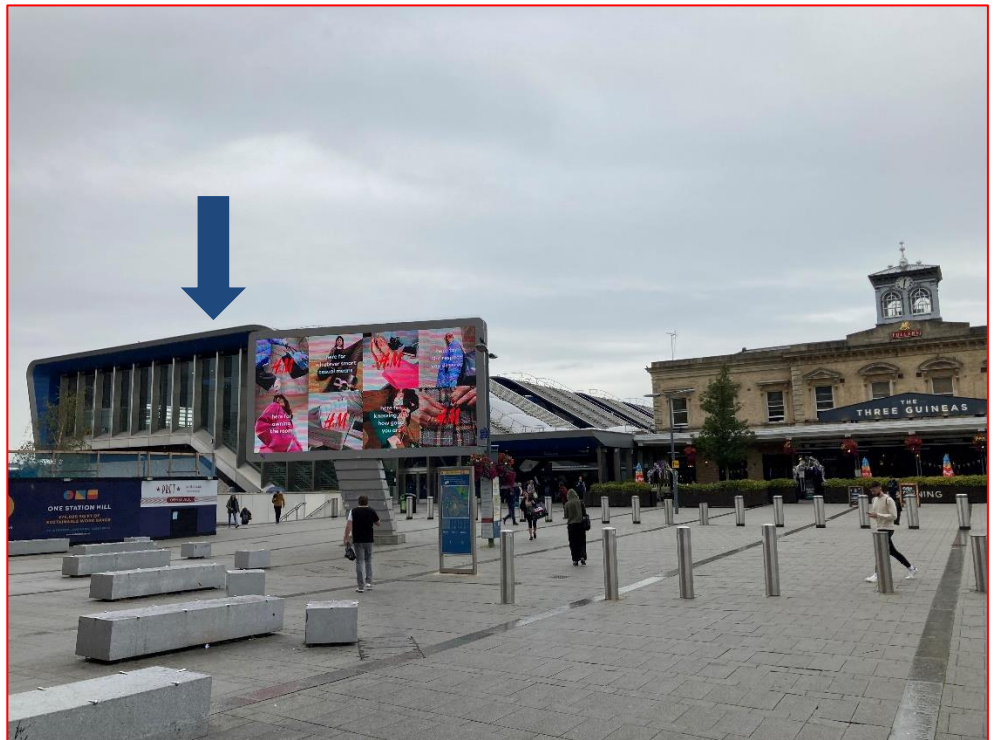


Plate 2 View from pedestrian area adjoining north elevation to Thames House. Note the location of the digital screen in this view in relation to the circa 2014 footbridge addition at the western end of the station (arrowed).



Plate 3 View from the northern end of Station Road. Note that the existing digital screen is not visible in this view.

Statue of King Edward VII and Great Western House

Description and Setting

- 4.16** The Statue of King Edward VII was introduced circa 1902 to commemorate the Coronation. It comprises a large bronze statue of the King in Coronation robes with a granite plinth by the sculptor George Edward Wade. The statue sits on an island site surrounded by road and is located to the southeast of the subject site.
- 4.17** The Great Western House (formerly listed as the Great Western Hotel) was constructed circa 1844 in the Italianate style. Comprising three storeys with basement, the building has been extended over time. The building sits on the corner of Blagrove Street and Station Road.

Impact of Development Proposals

- 4.18** As with the listed former Station building, the existing digital screen is noticeable in views of both the Statue of King Edward VII and Great Western House (Plate 4). The location of the existing screen ensures that it does not adversely affect either of these heritage assets visually. In this regard, the key views are those taken from the northwest part of the pedestrianised area adjoining the station. The existing screen is positioned so that it reads against

the backdrop of Thames House, thereby ensuring that it does not impede the key views of these heritage assets.

- 4.19** While the existing digital screen is noticeable within the immediate setting of both heritage assets, the proposal consists of minimal alteration to the base of the structure, and it is therefore not considered that these alterations will cause any adverse harm to the assets.



Plate 4 View of existing digital screen from south facing entrance to circa 2014 station footbridge extension.

Market Place/London Street Conservation Area

Description and setting

- 4.20** The subject site is located a considerable distance to the northwest of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. In the context of the current proposal the importance of key views of the Conservation Area has been considered, particularly with reference to the notable landmarks identified, which include the tower of St. Laurence's Church. The latter is considered to be an important characteristic of the Conservation Area.

Impact of Development Proposal

- 4.21** On the basis that the existing digital screen is located a considerable distance from the northern boundary of the Conservation Area, there will be no harm to the designation. The notable landmarks within the Conservation Area, such as the tower to St Laurence's Church will not be visually impeded by the minor alterations that are proposed to the existing screen.

5.0 Summary and Conclusions

- 5.1** This Heritage Statement considers land in the central part of the pedestrian area located to the south of Reading Station (the subject site) and the potential impact of the proposed alterations to the existing digital screen on the setting and significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets located in its vicinity.
- 5.2** There are a number of grade II listed buildings located in the vicinity of the subject site. The existing digital screen is located in a manner that is responsive to the settings of the heritage assets in the vicinity. The existing screen is only experienced in a number of views, with the more notable views of buildings such as the listed former Station building being unaffected. In the context of the listed former Station building, for example, the current location of the screen ensures that it does not impinge on notable longer views of the heritage asset, thereby maintaining the open nature of its setting and the unbroken view of the principal south façade.
- 5.3** On the basis that the proposals consist of a minimal amount of alteration to the structure of the existing screen and combined with the fact that the location of the screen will not change, it is considered that the proposals will not generate any adverse harm to the settings and significance of those heritage assets identified, nor will it be contrary to national or local policies designed to protect these assets.

Sources

Cartographic

1879 Ordnance Survey Map
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1957 Ordnance Survey Map
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