ET Planning

Planning Statement

Client:
Amar Bhatti

The Great Expectations

London Street, Reading, UK

Full Planning Application and Listed Building consent for external changes to the building following the removal of existing signs, lights, signage boards and Christmas garland decorations

Rosie Brace **Bsc (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

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1. Introduction

1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application and corresponding listed building consent at Great Expectations, 33 London Street, Reading, RG1 4PS. The proposed development comprises of external changes to the building.

1.2 This planning statement will cover the background to the application and provide the necessary information to enable its determination by officers at the Council. It will consider the proposal in light of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that key material considerations and the wider objectives of National and Local planning policy support the grant of permission.

1.3 In addition to this planning statement, the application is accompanied by the appropriate planning application forms and ownership certificate, duly signed and completed, and the following documents prepared by bad-studio:

- 1:1250 Site Location Plan and Block Plan
- Existing – Front Elevation
- Proposed – Front Elevation
- Existing – Ground Floor (Partial) Plan
- Proposed – Ground Floor (Partial) Plan

1.4 The relevant application fee of will be submitted by the applicant separately.

2. Site Location and Description

2.1 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 a Conservation Area. The building is situated at the junction of London Street and Queens Road and is set back from the main road by a large, paved area. The building is neighboured by a 4-storey office block to the north and a 4-storey block of flats to the south.

2.2 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 heights, and the main façade comprises of large fluted columns and angle piers. The surrounding buildings are non-uniform in character and materials.

3. Planning History

3.1 There are a number of previous planning applications for the site, these are detailed below.

3.2 Application Ref: 950948 for Part change of use from offices to public house and 1 no. two bed flat – determination made 23/11/1995

3.3 Application Ref: 950416 for Change of use from offices to public house on ground floor and basement, and change of use from office to 1 no. two bed flat on part of second floor – determination made 23/11/1995

3.4 Application Ref: 970758 for Front elevational treatment – determination made 19/01/1998

3.5 Application Ref: 970585 for Feature pub name sign and two facility sign boards – determination made 19/01/1998

3.6 Application Ref: 980311 for Feature banner signs to front – determination made 28/04/1998

3.7 Application Ref: 980438 for Two feature banner signs – determination made 22/05/1998

3.8 Application Ref: 991341 for Alteration of condition No. 5 of planning permission 95/0689, opening hours to be extended to 2.0am on Saturday night/Sunday morning – determination made 05/07/2000

3.9 Application Ref: 010791 for Conversion of 1st and 2nd floors to hotel accommodation – determination made 05/12/2001

3.10 Application Ref: 011322 for Change of use of first and second floors from B1 office to C1 hotel accommodation – determination made 05/12/2001

3.11 Application Ref: 010085 for Proposed extension to opening hours to 2am Thurs. / Fri. morning and Fri. / Sat. morning and Bank Holidays. Alteration to Condition 5 of planning permission 95/0689/FD varied 00/00568/VARIAT – determination made 30/01/2002

3.12 Application Ref: 030769 for Replacement of metal windows to rear section of property with wood windows – 07/01/2004

3.13 Application Ref: 071073 for Retrospective application for banner – withdrawn 19/04/2007

3.14 Application Ref: 070910 for Retrospective application for advertising for banner – granted 02/04/2008

4. Development Proposals

4.1 The proposal seeks for the following additions to the building frontage as follows:

- Black Wedge Canopy with gold logo to be sited above the main entrance
- Black drop arm awnings to be sited above the ground floor windows
- Existing front door to have solid timber panels replaced with glazing to match the existing windows
- New handrails leading up to the main entrance either side of stairs with a bronze and black finish to match existing door and ironmongery
- Black painted iron railings for new plant boxes located to the front of the ground floor windows

4.2 The proposals will require the removal of the following features:

- 'Great Expectations' sign to be removed
- External light/lantern to be removed
- Black painted signage boards to be removed
- 'Christmas Garland Decorations' to be removed

4.3 The proposal seeks to replace several aspects of the building frontage with updated modern equivalents.

4.4 Regarding the requirements of NPPG Paragraph: 029 Reference ID: 14-029-20140306 in respect of Design and Access Statements, the proposal is described as follows:

4.5 **Use and Amount:** The proposed use will remain as a hotel with associated restaurant.

4.6 **Layout and Scale:** The proposal does not seek to make any internal alterations. The proposed changes to the external front elevation will not increase the mass or bulk of the building and are solely proposed to improve the appearance of the building.

4.7 **Landscaping:** The proposal seeks for the addition of black painted iron railings to accommodate for plant boxes to the front of the ground floor windows. All other existing landscaping will remain the same.

4.8 **Appearance:** The proposal will largely replace features which affect the frontage of the ground floor whilst maintaining all original features of the building work. Existing signage and awnings will be replaced as well as the installation of new handrails either side of the stairs with a bronze and black finish. The additions do not detract from the existing frontage.

4.9 **Access & Parking:** The hotel does not facilitate parking on site, as such the existing arrangements will not change.

5. Policy Assessment

5.1 **National Guidance:** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a relevant material consideration to the application.

5.2 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 38 of the NPPF states that "*Local planning authorities should approach decision on proposed development in a positive and creative way*" and "*at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible*". Paragraph 119 of the NPPF comments that planning should "*make effective use of land*".

5.3 Paragraph 8 identifies the three objectives of sustainable development, as economic, environmental and social.

5.4 Paragraph 193 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."*

5.5 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."*

5.6 **Principle of Development:** Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.7 In this instance the Relevant Development Plan Documents consist of:

- Reading Borough Local Plan adopted 2019

5.8 The site is located within the built up area of Reading. Such proposals are therefore acceptable in principle.

5.9 **Historic Environment**: Policy EN1 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment states that historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. 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 setting.

5.10 As the proposal seeks to protect and enhance the Listed Building, Policy EN1 is adhered to. The proposal will replace existing features of the building frontage and enhance the character of its special architectural interest and poses no changes to the surrounding setting.

5.11 **Heritage:** Policy EN1 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment states that 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.

5.12 The building is a grade II listed building opened by Charles Dickens in 1843 as a Literary, Scientific and Mechanics' Institute and later a Primitive Methodist Chapel as well as a former Everyman Theatre. The proposal seeks to retain the existing character of the building whilst providing an update to the existing appearance, removing elements that detract from the character of the building. The proposal has been carefully considered to minimise any impact to the historic building and it is not considered that the changes harm the character or special interest of the listed building.

5.13 Statutory listing does not exclude all possibility of alteration but requires that necessary alterations be carried out in a manner that will preserve the special architectural or historic interest that gave rise to the listing. The scheme looks to upgrade the building in keeping with its use. It preserves the existing plan form and integrity of the building. These alterations will sustain the character and integrity of the heritage asset.

5.14 It is considered that there is 'less than substantial' harm to the building. The proposals therefore need to weighed against the obvious public benefits of scheme, this includes the benefits for the investment into this building and ensuring that it is maintained within a viable use.

5.15 Policy EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas of the Local Plan states that 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 considerations will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas.

5.16 Given the proposal seeks to enhance the original features of the character and architecture of the Conservation Area by upkeeping the existing original building features, the proposal complies with Policy EN3.

5.17 **Character and Appearance of the Area:** The site is located at the junction of London Street and Queens Road and is set back from the main road by a large, paved area. Whilst the proposal does seek for external changes to the signage, awnings, railings and plant boxes, the character will be largely maintained. The proposals do not alter the character and appearance of the area and it is considered that

they make a positive contribution to the building and the immediate context of the site.

5.18 **Residential Amenity:** The site is located on a main road in a mixed-use area. Several residential buildings are located within close proximity to the site, as well as office buildings, retail and restaurants.

5.19 The proposal will have no negative impacts on surrounding residents in terms of noise and disturbance given the relatively small scale of the alterations to the building.

5.20 **Trees and Landscaping:** The proposed development does not seek to change any aspects of trees and landscaping nearby or on site and will retain the existing planting at the base of the ground floor windows.

5.21 **Transport and Parking:** The proposal does not result in any amendments to the current transport and parking arrangements.

5.22 **Archaeology:** The proposal site lies within an area of archaeological potential as identified by Local Plan Policy EN2. However, as there are no ground works or disturbance required, it is considered that there are no impacts resulting from the proposed development.

5.23 **Contamination:** The site is not known to be located in a sensitive area for contamination, the existing use is not a source of contamination concern, and no changes are proposed to the ground. As such no additional risk is considered to arise.

5.24 **Ecology:** There is considered to be no impact to ecology as a result of the proposed development as no changes are proposed to the roof and the location of the site is within a built-up settlement.

5.25 **Community Infrastructure Levy:** As the proposal does not lead to an increase floor area, the proposal is not CIL liable.

6. Conclusion

6.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is acceptable in principle.

6.2 Material planning considerations have been carefully considered and analysed, as evidenced in section 5 of this statement and the supporting plans and documents. It is considered the proposed development would amount to a modern outlook on the listed building frontage and would have no adverse effect on the character of the listed building or the area.

6.3 It is considered that the proposed scheme complies with relevant Development Plan Policies and is further supported by National Guidance. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that planning permission and listed building consent is granted.

Rosie Brace BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI
Principal Planner | ET Planning
200 Dukes Ride Crowthorne RG45 6DS
rosie.brace@etplanning.co.uk 01344 508048

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Contact

Address

200 Dukes Ride RG45 6DS
One St Aldates OX1 1DE
32 London Road GU1 2AB
14 The Square SY1 1LH
72 Paris Street EX1 2JY

Phone

01344 508048
01865 507265
01483 363950
01743 612043
01392 691384

Web & Mail

Email: office@etplanning.co.uk
ET Planning Ltd | 10646740

Web: www.etplanning.co.uk

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