



Heritage Statement

1-15 Queen Victoria
Street & 148 Friar
Street and 147 Friar
Street, Reading



Heritage
Collective

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Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Relevant Planning Policy Framework.....	6
3.	Background and Development.....	11
4.	Statement of Significance.....	24
5.	Heritage Impacts Assessment	34
6.	Conclusions	48

Appendices

App. 1 Scale of Harm table (Heritage Collective, 2019)

1. Introduction

- 1.1** This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Heritage Collective, part of the HCUK Group, on behalf of the Thackeray Estate. It relates to heritage led proposals for the extension and alteration of the site which encompasses 1-15 Queen Victoria Street & 148 Friar Street and 147 Friar Street, Reading. Reading Borough Council (RBC hereafter) are the determining authority.



Figure 1: View of the site from Friar Street

- 1.2** 1-15 Queen Victoria Street & 148 Friar Street are grade II listed as part of a wider composition of coherent built form. The buildings were developed c.1900-1903 and are a good quality commercial terrace with a red brick frontage and Dutch and Flemish style gables. The building is in a particularly poor state of repair with scaffolding at the upper floors ensuring that no elements of the building fall to the ground. Without considerable investment the building's condition will continue to deteriorate.

- 1.3** 147 Friar Street is also grade II listed building as a separate designation. The building dates from the early 1880s and features a double height cast iron colonnade shopfront which is the principle reason for the building's designated as highlighted by the building's List Description.



Figure 2: Site location plan

- 1.4** The site is not located within or adjacent to a conservation area and the only other listed buildings in the vicinity are other parts of the wider terrace along Queen Victoria Street.

Relevant Background and Proposals

- 1.5** The proposals seek to comprehensively redevelop the site so to provide enlivened retail space within the ground floor units, a market space within the newly created

courtyard and an Aparthotel within the upper floors. In order to achieve this various alterations to the buildings are required which can be summarised as:

- The demolition of existing rear outbuildings which typically comprises a series of extensions dating to the late 19th and 20th centuries;
- A rear extension to the Queen Victoria Street terrace;
- External alterations to Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street which seek to enhance the architectural merit of the listed buildings and halt deterioration;
- Internal alterations to upper floors to convert the spaces into an Aparthotel, to include reinstatement of traditional features where appropriate; and
- The introduction of replacement built form within the courtyard.

1.6

The proposed development has been subject to extensive pre-application discussions with RBC, specifically their conservation officer (LPA ref: 201372/PREAPP). On heritage matters, the pre-application response was wholly positive and noted that:

"In general terms and based on the limited information submitted at this stage the Council's Conservation and Urban Design Officer is of the opinion that the approach to the scheme appears well planned and that the proposed development has the potential to enhance the heritage character of the buildings and their setting."

1.7

Other minor matters and suggested amendments to the scheme identified during the pre-application stage included wholly minor comments and queries on the scheme design. These points, summarised below, have all been addressed as part of the revised submission:

- To confirm the cast iron columns within the shopfront of 147 Friar Street would be retained. These were accidentally omitted from one of the pre-application drawings;
- As requested, a pitched slate roof has been added to the new two storey commercial unit within the courtyard space;
- The design of proposed columns to the rear extension have been revisited; and

- Existing basement to ground floor staircases within nos. 5, 7 and 11 Queen Victoria Street are retained.

1.8

As part of the pre-application response, a suite of documents was requested to be provided at application stage so to ensure that the heritage assets could be appropriately safeguarded. These documents have been provided as part of the application submission and can be summarised as:

- Detailed significance and phasing plans based on a thorough assessment of the building;
- A photographic record of the listed building (contained within the Schedule of Works);
- Schedule of Works for internal alterations to the listed buildings; and
- Timetable of urgent works to the listed buildings.

1.9

Overall, the proposals amount to a heritage led scheme which is based on a thorough understanding of the historic development, character and significance of the listed buildings and the site itself. The scheme as a whole seeks to preserve and enhance the significance and unique heritage values of the designated heritage assets and provide the buildings on the site with a long term viable use that will see for the conservation and maintenance of the listed buildings.

Purpose of this Statement

1.10

The purpose of this Heritage Statement is to assist with the determination of the applications by informing the decision takers on the effects of the proposed development on the historic built environment. Specifically, this report assesses the significance of the identified listed buildings and the effect of the proposed development on that significance. Particular regard is given to the provisions of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990. The report also sets out how the proposal complies with the guidance and policy of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 and local planning policy.

1.11

Value judgements on the significance of the heritage assets affected are presented and the effects of the proposals upon that significance are appraised. The heritage

assets affected have been observed and assessed by the author following a site visit made in 2020 in good weather.

2. Relevant Planning Policy Framework

2.1 Sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 require the decision maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building and its setting when exercising planning functions. The decision maker must give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the significance of the listed building, and there is a strong presumption against the grant of permission for development that would harm its heritage significance.¹

2.2 For the purposes of this statement, preservation equates to an absence of harm.² Harm is defined in paragraph 84 of Historic England's Conservation Principles as change which erodes the significance of a heritage asset.³

2.3 The significance of a heritage asset is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as being made up of four main constituents: architectural interest, historical interest, archaeological interest and artistic interest. The assessments of heritage significance and impact are normally made with primary reference to the four main elements of significance identified in the NPPF.

2.4 The setting of a heritage asset can contribute to its significance. Setting is defined in the NPPF as follows:

"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."

2.5 The NPPF requires the impact on the significance of the designated heritage asset to be considered in terms of either "substantial harm" or "less than substantial harm" as described within paragraphs 195 and 196 of that document. National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) makes it clear that substantial harm is a high test, and case law describes substantial harm in terms of an effect that would

¹ Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Limited v East Northamptonshire District Council and others [2014] EWCA Civ 137.

² South Lakeland v SSE [1992] 2 AC 141.

³ Conservation Principles, 2008, paragraph 84.

vitiate or drain away much of the significance of a heritage asset.⁴ The Scale of Harm is tabulated at **Appendix 1**.

2.6 Paragraphs 195 and 196 of the NPPF refer to two different balancing exercises in which harm to significance, if any, is to be balanced with public benefit. Paragraph 18a-020-20190723 of National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) online makes it clear that some heritage-specific benefits can be public benefits. Paragraph 18a-018-20190723 of the same NPPG makes it clear that it is important to be explicit about the category of harm (that is, whether paragraph 195 or 196 of the NPPF applies, if at all), and the extent of harm, when dealing with decisions affecting designated heritage assets, as follows:

"Within each category of harm (which category applies should be explicitly identified), the extent of the harm may vary and should be clearly articulated."

2.7 Paragraphs 193 and 194 of the NPPF state that great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset when considering applications that affect its significance, irrespective of how substantial or otherwise that harm might be.

Local Policy

2.8 The main element of local planning policy is the Local Plan (adopted November 2019) which contains the main planning policies for Reading up to 2036. The following policies are relevant to the proposals:

2.9 **EN1 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment:** This policy notes that historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. It goes on to note that 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 and any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form

⁴ Bedford Borough Council v SSCLG and Nuon UK Limited [2013] EWHC 4344 (Admin).

of public benefits. The policy also notes that 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.

2.10 EN6 New Development in a Historic Context: This policy notes that in areas characterised by heritage assets, the historic environment will inform and shape new development. New development will make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development. When determining planning applications for new development, the following factors will be taken into consideration:

- The positive contribution of the development to the existing historic townscape (scale, height, mass, proportion, plot size, street form, materials, significant vistas and views, and open space);
- Sensitivity to historic context;
- Reflection of borough-wide major heritage themes that contribute to local distinctiveness (e.g. patterned brickwork or former worker terraced housing); and
- Whether development promotes and/or improves access to previously undiscovered or neglected historic significance.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

2.11 The National Planning Practice Guidance (updated July 2019) provides advice on enhancing and conserving the historic environment in accordance with the NPPF.

2.12 In relation to harm the guidance states:

"Within each category of harm (which category applies should be explicitly identified), the extent of the harm may vary and should be clearly articulated.

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. The harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting."

2.13 Paragraph 020 of the document notes that public benefits can be heritage based. The guidance goes on to note that examples of heritage based public benefits include:

- Sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting;
- Reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset; and
- Securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long term conservation.

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

2.14 This document, published by Historic England as a second edition in December 2017, replaces the earlier 2015 setting guidance. The document provides for a thorough understanding of the setting of a heritage asset and the relationship of the setting to curtilage, character and context.

2.15 The guidance document notes, in paragraph 18, that the protection of the setting of heritage assets need not prevent change. The document recognises that not all heritage assets are of equal importance and states that the contribution made by their setting to their significance will also vary. Not all settings have the same capacity to accommodate change without causing harm to the significance of the asset.

2.16 As per earlier Historic England guidance, the document advocates a stepped approach to assessing the impact of change within setting on the significance of heritage assets. This stepped approach is:

- Step 1: identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected;
- Step 2: assess whether, how and to what degree these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s);
- Step 3: assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance;
- Step 4: explore the way to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm; and
- Step 5: make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.

2.17 Guidance under Step 2 notes that the asset's physical surroundings and how the asset is experienced (such as views, noise, tranquillity, sense of enclosure etc.) should be taken in to consideration.

2.18 Step 3 is also important in making it clear that a proposed development should not be assessed in terms of its impact on setting; instead it should be assessed in terms of the impacts on significance. That is to say, what matters is not the extent of visibility of the development or change to the setting of an asset, but the extent of change to its archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interest. In some circumstances, this evaluation may need to extend to cumulative and complex impacts which may have as great an effect on heritage assets as large-scale development and which may not only be visual. At the very least the assessment should address the key attributes of the development in terms of its location and siting, form and appearance, additional effects and permanence.

2.19 Paragraph 39 notes that options for reducing the harm arising from development may include the relocation of elements of a development or changes to its design. It notes that good design may reduce or remove the harm.

3. Background and Development

- 3.1** Reading originated as a Saxon settlement, its name derived from the Old English *Reada ingas* ('the people of Reada'). Its position close to the confluence of the River Thames with the Kennet facilitated riverine trading links with both London and the wider Thames Valley. The settlement was first documented by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in AD 871, when it was occupied by a Viking army, shortly before the Battle of Reading, in which the Saxon King of Wessex, Aethelbert, was defeated. The Vikings subsequently erected a defensive earthen rampart between the two rivers east of the settlement. Documentary sources record a second Viking incursion in 1006, when the settlement was burnt to the ground.
- 3.2** The Norman taxation document known today as the Domesday Book, which documents the period 1066 - 1086, records two manors in Reading. Within the principal manor, held by the king, there were 55 villagers and 30 smallholders. In addition to the farmland and meadow there was woodland sufficient to support 100 swine, together with four mills and three fisheries.⁵ The smaller manor, which belonged to Battle Abbey (St Martin), comprised nine villagers and eight smallholders. In addition to their farmland there was woodland sufficient to support five swine, two mills and 2½ fisheries together with a church.⁶ The Normans are thought to have built a castle on Castle Hill, initially an earth and timber motte and bailey castle, later replaced in stone, which was probably demolished c.1152 during the civil war in the reign of King Stephen.
- 3.3** Reading Abbey, a royal monastery, endowed by Henry I in 1121-5, was one of the largest monasteries in Europe. The surviving abbey gateway and extensive ruins of the abbey church and abbey complex within its precinct wall lie close to the River Kennet on the east side of the town. In addition to its religious functions, the abbey attracted and promoted commerce not only along the Thames and Kennet rivers but also as a result of its location at the intersection of major roads linking London with Bath, and Oxford with Southampton. In addition to its religious and royal significance, the abbey developed a planned new town with new streets and burgage plots together with a market place immediately west of its precinct; the

⁵ Morris 1978: 1.41; 1.42.

⁶ Morris 1978: 15.2.

principal streets being Friar Street, Broad Street, London Street and the Market Place itself, which attracted visitors and pilgrims from all over Europe. The town prospered in the medieval period and there are numerous documents illustrating friction between the guilds and merchants on the one hand and the Abbot on the other.⁷

3.4 A House of Franciscan friars (Grey Friars) had first been established in the town in 1233, at the opposite (west) end of the street leading westwards from St Laurence's church (built in the 1120s adjacent to the abbey) towards Caversham, a street which had been known as New Street (later Friars Street) since at least 1224. The Friary site was enlarged in 1285 because the original site closer to the river was seasonally flooded.⁸ The approximate site of the Greyfriars House lies in the vicinity of No. 65 Friars Street.

3.5 Following the dissolution of the monasteries by King Henry VIII in 1538, the abbey was given to the Duke of Somerset as a private house, but having been left vacant was quickly robbed of building stone by the townspeople. Nevertheless some of the buildings, such as the abbot's lodgings were retained for use as occasional royal accommodation. The King gave the town its independence from church authority at this time, and the friary house was given to the mayor and burgesses of Reading as a new guildhall. Although the town initially suffering an economic downturn following the dissolution owing to the lack of pilgrims and visitors, nevertheless the town prospered as a centre of the wool and cloth trade.

3.6 As a major thoroughfare and part of the planned medieval town, both sides of Friar Street would have been occupied by shops and houses throughout the medieval period.

3.7 John Speed's 1611 Map of Reading shows the major elements of the medieval town (**Figure 3**). The Friary site (marked A) stands at the western end of the street (now known as Friars Street) leading to St Laurence's Church (marked D), with the Abbey beyond on the east side of the town (marked H). The approximate location

⁷ Ditchfield & Page 1923.

⁸ Ditchfield & Page 1907.

of the Site is ringed in red. Reading had become a thriving and prosperous cloth town by this date, with a population of over 5000.⁹



Figure 3: 1611, John Speed's Map of Reading

- 3.8** As a result of the Siege of Reading in 1642, during the course of the English Civil War, in which the royalist garrison of the town was defeated, town was penalised by heavy taxation. The cloth trade was particularly badly hit. The Kennet Navigation, completed in 1723, enabled barges and boats to travel as far as Newbury. Although an iron works had been built in the 18th century, and Simonds' Brewery, the first of several successful breweries for which the town became famous, opened in 1785, the town's prosperity did not fully return until the beginning of the 19th century (1810) when the Kennet and Avon Canal was completed, connecting London via the Thames at Reading with Bristol and the Bristol Channel. Two large companies were established in the town at this time: Suttons Seeds (1806) and Huntley & Palmers Biscuits (1822).
- 3.9** Transport links were further improved by first the arrival of the Great Western Railway in 1840, followed by the South Eastern Railway in 1849 and The London

⁹ Ditchfield & Page 1923.

and South Western Railway in 1856. Reading railway station opened in 1840. A contemporary map by Edward Weller shows the site of the newly built station and approach together with a new road linking the station with Friar Street (**Figure 4**). The approximate location of the Site is ringed in red.

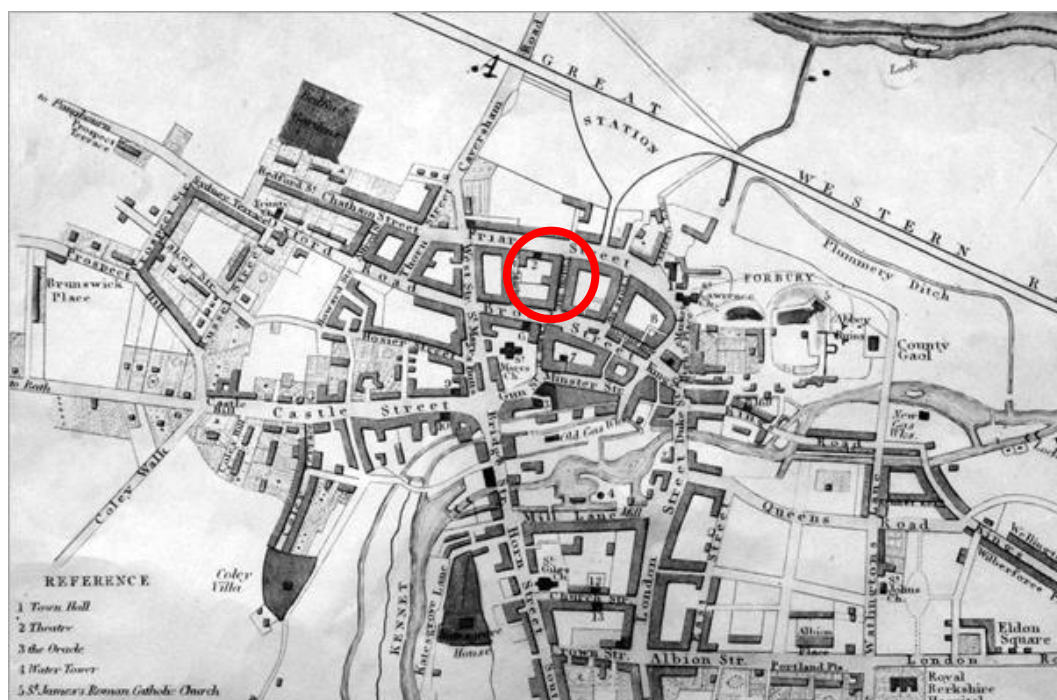


Figure 4: 1840. Edward Weller's Map of Reading

- 3.10** The censuses show an expanding population throughout the second half of the 19th century, increasing almost threefold from 21,500 in 1851 to 59,000 by 1901.¹⁰ Reading became a county borough under the Local Government Act of 1888. Building to accommodate the expanding population included not only a proliferation of terraced suburban dwellings, but also commercial landmark building in the town such as the Board Schools, banks and shop premises, mainly utilising coloured brick with terracotta dressings.¹¹
- 3.11** Civic buildings, including the town hall (built in 1897 by Albert Waterhouse) had been built at the eastern end of Friar Street, close to St Laurence's church, whilst the western half was occupied by theatres and clubs, and what have been termed

¹⁰ ancestry.co.uk

¹¹ Tyack, Bradley & Pevsner 2010.

'less salubrious pursuits'. The earliest Ordnance Survey large-scale mapping of 1879 shows that both sides of Friar Street were densely packed with properties, with long narrow plots fronting the streets and extending at the rear, often with yards or gardens, often served by narrow access lanes reflecting the burgh layout (Figure 5). The footprint of the present Site occupied part of a Gentlemen's Club, the Athenaeum, and two properties to the west, together with their rear gardens/yards and outbuildings.

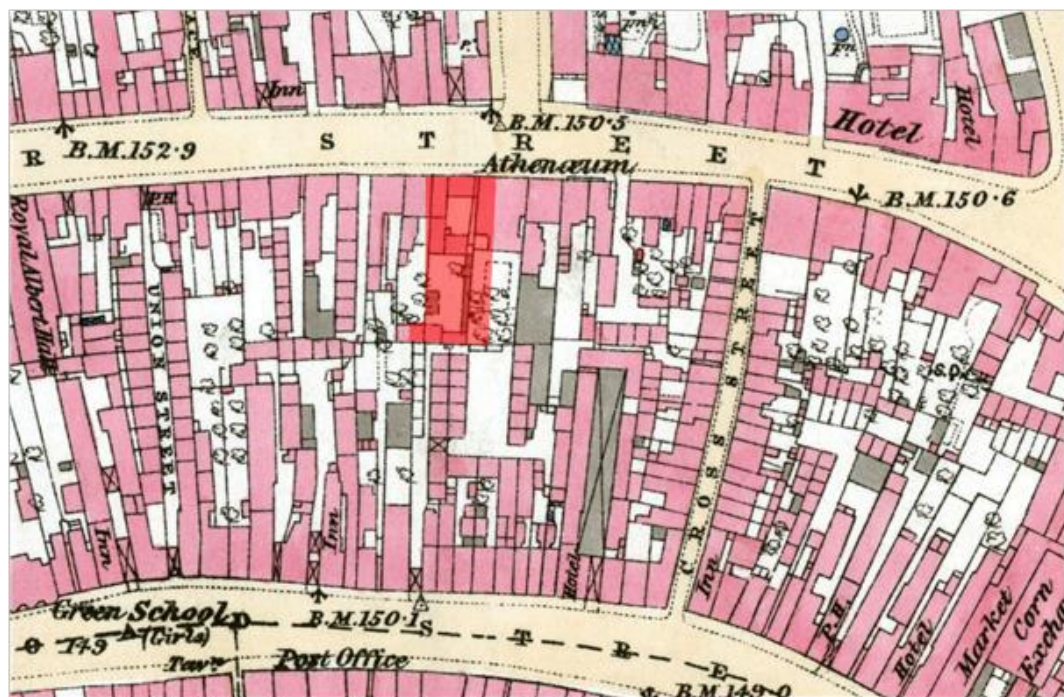


Figure 5: 1879. OS 25-inch 1st Edition. Reproduced with permission of the National Library of Scotland

3.12 The Charles E. Goad Ltd Fire Insurance Plan of 1895 provides details of the properties involved (Figure 6).

3.13 Comparison between the 1879 and 1895 plans (Figures 5 and 6) show differences in the footprints of the properties west of the Athenaeum, suggesting that the current No. 147 Friar Street was built in this period. The Goad Fire Insurance Plan shows that the building was 3½-storeys in height with an iron and glass frontage to second floor level; this frontage was retained when the block was redeveloped at the beginning of the 20th century. The current frontage bears the date 1882 for a

company of Auctioneers, Surveyors and Land & Estate Agents. However, this signage refers to the history of a later 20th century occupant (Nicholas Estate Agents) rather than to the early history of the building itself.¹² This building, together with its next door neighbour to the west, was occupied in 1895 by the premises of the Arthur Newbery Furniture Factory, a two-storey cabinet factory and three-storey store building at the rear.



Figure 6: 1895 Charles E Goad Ltd. Insurance Place © British Library

3.14 Properties in Friar Street and Broad Street were demolished at the end of the 19th century in order to create a new shopping thoroughfare linking Broad Street with the railway station. The new street, Queen Victoria Street, was completed in 1903. The work was one of a number of contemporary redevelopment schemes in the town which were sponsored by local Councillor and businessman, J.C. Fidler (of Fidler and Sons' Royal Berkshire Seed Stores). The street was flanked by

¹² <https://shopfronttelegy.wordpress.com/2016/12/17/nicholas/>

matching 4-storey blocks with shops at ground level, constructed in yellow brick with terracotta facades and dressings. The design included corner plots at 148 and 150 Friar Street and Nos 24-28 and 35-38 Broad Street. The architect is uncertain: the Historic England List Entry names the possible architect as County Surveyor Joseph Morris, whilst Pevsner attributes the design to local architects S. Slingsby Stallwood and Charles Smith & Sons. The terracotta dressings were created by S & E Collier Ltd. The company published a contemporary advertisement in *The Contractors', Merchants' and Estate Managers' Compendium*, 1907, to highlight their work (**Figure 7**).



Figure 7: An advertisement (1907) published soon after completion of Queen Victoria Street

3.15 The 1912-13 Ordnance Survey map shows the new street layout for the first time (**Figure 8**). Nos 1-3 Queen Victoria Street and Nos 146-148 Friar Street comprised a single shop, replacement premises for Arthur Newbury Furnishers. Differences in the pitch of the roofs of these premises suggest that this part of the street had been purposely designed to accommodate the single premises. Several of the former buildings at the rear of the original Newbery factory works, including the cabinet works detailed by the Charles Goad Insurance plan (**Figure 6**) were retained, thus restricting the space at the rear of Nos. 5-13.



Figure 8: 1912-13. OS 25-inch 3rd Edition. Reproduced with permission of the National Library of Scotland

3.16 A postcard, posted in 1908, is the earliest image showing the new Newbery Furniture premises (**Figure 9**).

3.17 An early 20th century photograph shows the view looking southwards down Queen Victoria Street towards Broad Street (**Figure 10**).

- 3.18** A photograph taken in 1939 shows the corner of Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street and the Newbery's shop premises (**Figure 11**).



Figure 9: c.1908 Friary Street, looking east



Figure 10: Early 20th century. Queen Victoria Street, looking south towards Broad Street



Figure 11: 1939 Photograph of the site when it was in use as Newbery's Furniture Store

- 3.19** A series of aerial photographs were taken of Reading that show the site in the early 1950s (**Figures 12 and 13**) and demonstrate well the character of the rear of the site at this time.
- 3.20** A photograph taken in the late 1950s-early 1960s, looking east along Friars Street, shows changes to the shopfront and first floor windows of No. 148 (**Figure 14**). The building was still occupied by Newberys at this time. The 1957-9 Ordnance Survey map shows that the shopfront to No 147 Friar Street had also been altered to provide a recessed funnel-shaped access into the shop (**Figure 15**).



Figure 12: 1951 Aerial photograph of the site from the west © Britain From Above (ref: EAW034973)



Figure 13: 1951 Aerial photograph of the site from the west © Britain From Above (ref: EAW034972)



Figure 14: Late 1950s-early 1960s. Looking east along Friar Street



Figure 15: 1957-9 Ordnance survey map

3.21 Photographs taken in 1973 show further modernisation of the shop fronts of Nos. 1-3 (**Figure 16**) and Nos. 11-15 Queen Victoria Street (**Figure 17**). The former Newbery's premises remained a furniture store, by now the premises of New Day House Furnishers.



Figure 16: 1973. Looking south down Queen Victoria Street. © Get Reading



Figure 17: 1973. Looking north up Queen Victoria Street. © Get Reading

4. Statement of Significance

- 4.1** It is recognised that not all parts of a heritage asset will necessarily be of equal significance. In some cases, certain aspects or elements could accommodate change without affecting the Government's objective, which includes the conservation of heritage assets and which seeks to ensure that decisions are based on the nature, extent and level of significance of heritage assets.
- 4.2** Change is only considered to be harmful if it erodes an asset's significance. Understanding the significance of any heritage asset affected (paragraph 189 of the NPPFs) is therefore fundamental to understanding the scope for and acceptability of change
- 4.3** An assessment of the significance of the grade II listed buildings affected by the proposals is provided below. In accordance with paragraph 189 of the NPPF, the descriptions are proportionate to the assets' significance and are sufficient to understand the nature of any impact the proposals may have upon that significance.
- 4.4** In order to better present an understanding of the significance of the listed buildings a full internal appraisal has been undertaken alongside a series of phasing and significance plans produced by Heritage Collective. These are separately bound but should be reviewed in conjunction with this section of the Heritage Statement.

1-15 Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friar Street (grade II)

- 4.5** 1-15 Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friar Street are part of a wider grade II designation which encompasses:
- 1-31 and 2-32 Queen Victoria Street;
 - 148, 149 and 150 Friar Street; and
 - 24-28 and 35-38 Broad Street.

4.6 This series of buildings was listed as a single entity in December 1978 (UID: 1113564) and its List Description reads:

"...A circa 1894 commercial street with returns to Broad and Friar Streets. Probably by Joseph Morris. Dutch gabled free Baroque style. 3 1/2 storeys, yellow brick and terracotta with dividing Ionic pilasters. Dentil cornice. Pilasters to dormers, broken pediments above. An elongated pattern of shallow bays to 1st and 2nd floors 4:2:1:1:1:1:3. Mullion and transom window to bays, sashes with architraves (and pediments on 1st floor) to rest. Modern shopfronts, retaining cornice to fascia and scroll brackets to pilasters, only one shop retains prewar shopfront. Large returns to Broad Street. The return to east (No 28 Broad Street) supported by No 26 (dated 1894, grey brick with red terracotta dressings) and by No 24 (an early C20 Bank with -large shaped pediment doorway on corner to Cross Street; red brick with stone dressings and stone fret patterns to gables)."

4.7 The part of the wider listed building which falls within the application site is the northern part of the terrace along Queen Victoria Street which turns the corner west with Friar Street. This building, and the wider listed structure, is of considerable architectural quality, primarily deriving from the quality and form of its front elevation which includes brickwork, terracotta, decorative gables, granite pilasters and original windows.

4.8 Within the site itself, while generally complete above ground floor, the ground floor shopfronts, signs and lights are all modern and detract from the significance of the terrace.

4.9 A double-height shopfront is present to no.148. While this is shown on the 1908 photograph the present timber infilling is modern (1950s-60s, see **figure 14**) and detracts from the architectural interest of the frontage. Interestingly a well detailed double height feature is echoed on the southern end of the terrace, suggesting that these unusual features may be original (though that present to no.148 is no longer in its original condition or form).

4.10 Despite the changes to the shopfronts, the terrace remains as a good example of an early 20th century commercial premises and this bestows a degree of historic (illustrative and associative) interest.



Figures 18 and 19: Modern ad hoc shopfronts along 1-15 Queen Victoria Street

4.11

In addition to the changes to the ground floor exterior of the building, it is relevant to note that the condition of the front façade is deteriorating, with key architectural detailing such as the gables, which are structurally unstable, and brick and terracotta dressings in need of repair. This is exacerbated by the vacancy of the upper floors.



Figures 20 and 21: Modern shopfronts to 148 Friar Street which, on the Friar Street elevation (right), includes a two storey element

4.12

The rear of the listed building within the site has been heavily altered and demonstrates a basic, rudimentary design of limited architectural merit with blank brick elevations, modern windows and a detracting fire escape walkway. All of the

rear chimneystacks have been removed and the roofs altered with new skylights and vents following the removal of the dormer windows. Nonetheless, the rear of the elevation is of some value, albeit to a significantly lesser degree than the front. The rear elevation of no.15 Queen Victoria Street retains more of its original rear composition with attractive brick-faced dormer windows and is of more architectural value than the rest of the terrace within the site.



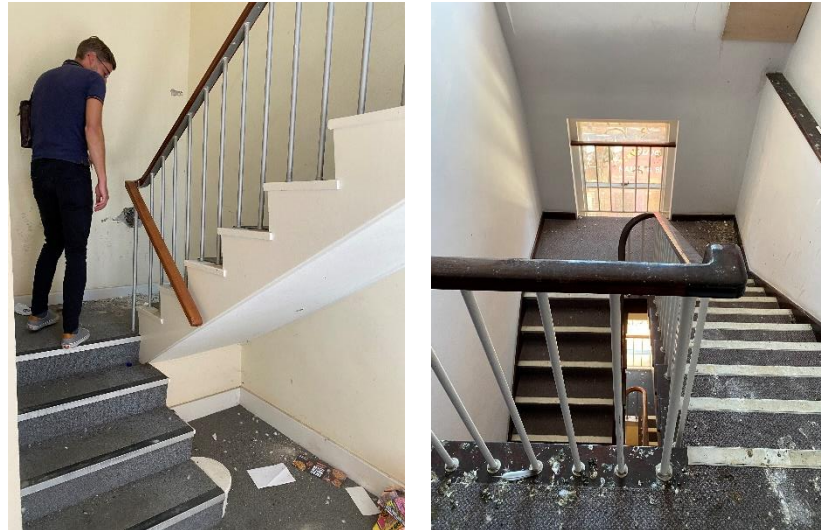
Figures 22 and 23: Poor quality rear elevations of the site



Figures 24 and 25: Open plan layout and modern partitions present within 1-3 Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friar Street

4.13 Internally, nos. 1-3 Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friar Street have been heavily altered with all partitions being late 20th century in date associated with the office

use of the buildings. The interiors of this part of the terrace are of no particular heritage value.

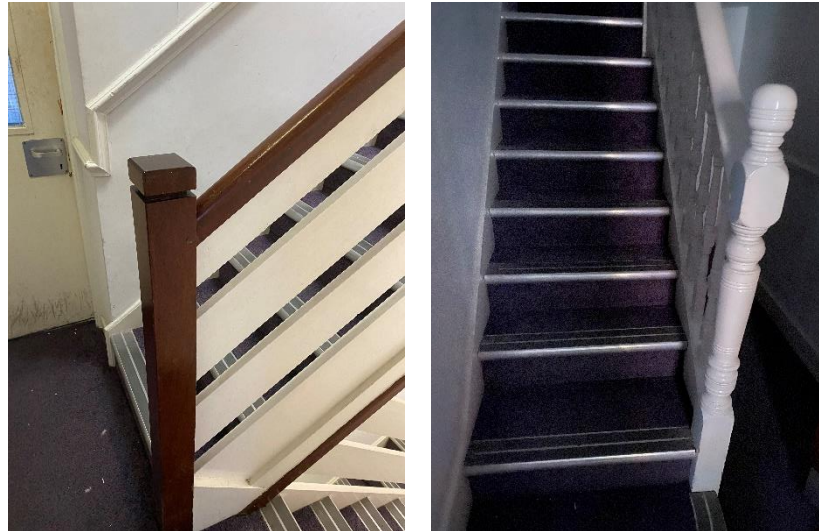


Figures 26 and 27: Staircase located in 3 Queen Victoria Street with modern lower flights and earlier 20th century upper flights

4.14 Elsewhere within the terrace (5-15 Queen Victoria Street), while the basement and ground floors are equally heavily altered, elements of the original interiors survive to the upper floors. This is typically in the form of plan form, original room proportions and circulation with party walls, original staircases (present within no. 5 and 9), chimney breasts and partitions. The presence of this fabric adds to the architectural and historic interest of the building.



Figures 28 and 29: Examples of earlier elements of plan form present



Figures 30 and 31: Images of staircases present within 5-15 Queen Victoria Street

147 Friar Street (grade II)

4.15 147 Friar Street was grade II listed in December 1978 (UID: 1113488), it's List Description reads:

"Circa 1880s. 3½ storey commercial frontage. Painted brick with stone voussoirs and dressings. Cornice and parapet. 3 high segmental headed dormers with ramped moulded coping between and modillion cornices, centre 2-light. These and 3 pairs of windows on 2nd floor are plate glass sashes. 4 depressed arches on 1st floor under cornice and fascia with outer pilasters and dividing fluted columns with Corinthian caps. Cornice and fascia over ground floor shop front of similar pattern with recessed entrance. The 2 storey shop front is the main interest of this building and it is included for that reason."

4.16 As indicated by the List Description, the significance of 147 Friar Street primarily relates to the architectural quality of the 1880s front elevation, particularly the double height colonnade shopfront and the 3no. segmental headed dormer windows that feature moulded coping between and modillion cornices. The building is a good example of a late 19th century commercial premises and this provides the structure with a degree of historic (illustrative and associative) interest. However, elements of the frontage now detract from the significance of the building and represent an opportunity for enhancement. These detracting features include:

- The 20th century shopfront with splayed frontage which divides the shopfront into two units;
- The boarding over the facias which obscures the full height character; and
- The modern paint applied to the front elevation which was originally left as exposed red brick.



Figure 32: Front elevation of 147 Friar Street (grade II)

- 4.17** An inscription above the first floor indicates the building was constructed for an auction and land agency firm established in 1882. However, this lettering was added in the late 20th century and it is known that, by 1895, the building was occupied by Arthur Newbery Furniture.
- 4.18** While the primary interest of the building relates to its frontage and the interior has been heavily altered at various phases and is now in a deteriorating condition. Nonetheless, there are some components of the interior which are also of value.

4.19 The most notable phase of alteration appears to date to the 1930s when the rear stair and lift core were added and new internal partitions (curved to the first floor) were introduced. While not part of the original phase of the building's construction these additions are of some limited value in their own right.



Figures 33 and 24: Curved partitions at first floor and a view of the 1930s stair and lift core located to the rear of the building



Figures 35 and 36: Internal views within 147 Friar Street showing surviving partitions and chimney breasts

4.20 Despite the levels of alteration and deterioration present, some late 19th century elements of the interior survive. These include projecting chimney breasts still visible on flank walls and a small number of partitions which retain portions of lath and plaster. Where present, surviving elements of plan form present some degree of historic legibility within the building, but generally the interiors (now primarily open plan) are able to accommodate change.



Figures 37 and 38: Internal views within 147 Friar Street showing surviving partitions and the general open plan layout present

Built Form to the Rear of the Site

4.21 To the rear of the Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street buildings are a variety of extensions and structures which, either by virtue of attachment (i.e. they are connected to the listed buildings) or curtilage (i.e. fall under the provisions of section 1(5)(b) of the 1990 Act, sometimes referred to as 'curtilage listed'), be considered part of the listed buildings for procedural matters.

4.22 A review of the history of the site and appraisal of the 1895 Goad Plan suggests that most of these structures have historic links to 147 Friar Street from this building's use as a furniture store.



Figures 39 and 40: Built form present to the rear of the site including the 19th century structures to the rear

4.23 To the southern end of the site are two red brick structures which are shown on the 1895 Goad Plan. These include a three storey building formerly in use as a store and a two storey building formerly in use as a cabinet factory. While contributing to the significance of 147 Friar Street as former ancillary buildings and being broadly contributory to the setting of the Queen Victoria Street terrace these buildings are not of any special interest in their own right.

4.24 Other built form to the rear of the site is more modern, heavily altered and possesses either a neutral or negative role in the heritage values of the listed buildings. The interiors of these aspects of the site are of no value.



Figures 41 and 42: Built form present to the rear of the site including



Figures 43, 44 and 45: Interior view within buildings to the rear of the site

5. Heritage Impacts Assessment

5.1 With reference to **Appendix 1**, along with the most important considerations relating to the impact of the proposals, judgements on the impact of the outline proposals on significance have been set out below. This part of the Heritage Statement should be read in conjunction with the application drawings, Schedule of Works (SoW hereafter), and the significance and phasing plans.

Summary of Proposed Development

5.2 Overall, the proposed development can be summarised as the comprehensive redevelopment of the site to provide a high quality commercial and visitor accommodation that will reinvigorate a series of currently underused heritage assets within Reading town centre.

5.3 While interventions to the listed buildings are required to facilitate this, the proposals are based on a thorough understanding of the historic development, character and significance of the grade II listed buildings. Through the design development phase, the project team has sought to minimise harm through good design and retention of historic fabric and maximise benefits. Advice received from the Council as part of the pre-application stage has fed into and informed the scheme as submitted.

5.4 The works required are discussed below but can be summarised as:

- External works to Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street which seek to halt deterioration and enhance the architectural merit of the listed buildings. These works include the introduction of coherent and traditionally designed shopfronts across the terrace;
- The demolition of existing rear outbuildings which typically comprises a series of extensions and structures dating to the late 19th and 20th centuries;
- Introduction of replacement built form to the rear of the site following the demolition of the outbuildings comprising an extension to the terrace and new

courtyard structures forming an open market square to create a new, accessible public space; and

- Internal alterations to the buildings to facilitate the retention of commercial lower ground and ground floors with upper floors converted into an Aparthotel, where relevant works include the reinstatement of traditional features. These works are fully detailed by a submitted Schedule of Works which is referred to within this Heritage Statement.

External alterations to the Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street frontages

5.5 One of the main goals of the proposed development is restoration and enhancement of the site's street frontage. There are various components to this element of the proposals which amount to a considerable heritage benefit both individually and collectively. In addition, these works are envisaged to act as a catalyst for collective enhancement of Queen Victoria Street as a whole. These works are considered below under the relevant subheadings.

Repair works to halt deterioration

5.6 As previously noted, the frontage of 1-15 Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friar Street is currently supported by scaffolding and in a poor condition with masonry at risk of falling down onto the pedestrianised street below. The continued deterioration of the building will, over time, increase risks to the grade II listed terrace and result in increased loss of original masonry detailed and cause harm to the building's significance.

5.7 Proposals seek to undertake widespread repair works to the terrace's frontage in order to reinstate structural stability to the façade and reinstate lost detailing. As a whole these works would remove risk (both to the building's longevity and the public) and would restore the architectural interest of the decorative frontage. The repair works would follow best practice conservation practice and would be heavily informed by those recently completed repair works which were undertaken to the

southern end of the listed terrace. A guide to the restoration works is contained within the submitted method statements.

Introduction of new shopfronts and signage

- 5.8** As identified in the preceding section, existing shopfronts to the Queen Victoria Street terrace are ad hoc in their nature and, due to their modern and often inappropriate character, detract from the significance of the listed buildings. Proposals seek to replace all the shopfronts and signage in the terrace to provide a coherent architectural approach reinstating a degree of consistency to the terrace and street.
- 5.9** The proposed shopfronts have been heavily informed by traditional shopfront design and surviving historic photographs which show Queen Victoria Street. The shopfronts would feature fascia panels, stallrisers, a single side entrance door, street numbering and traditionally detailed door with plinth and glazing. The shopfront colour and signage is proposed to be consistent across the terrace. These works would represent a considerable enhancement to the architectural integrity and authenticity of the listed building.
- 5.10** In order to reflect the various shopfront arrangements on other parts of the site, proposals differ for 147 and 148 Friar Street.
- 5.11** At 147 Friar Street, proposals seek to alter the to reinstate it back to its known 'off-centre' arrangement present during 1939. While this is not the original configuration the change would only affect modern shopfront fabric and the works would provide an appropriate entranceway into the new rear market square. As confirmed as part of the pre-application process, all original cast iron columns present within the shopfront arrangement would be retained. These works would preserve the significance of the grade II listed 147 Friar Street.
- 5.12** While part of the wider Queen Victoria Street terrace, 148 Friar Street has a different shopfront arrangement with double height glazing present. As this double height glazing is present to southern end of the terrace it would appear as though the general arrangement, while unusual, was part of the original arrangement. Nonetheless, the existing double height glazing present to 148 Friar Street dates

from the mid 20th century and the poor quality shopfront detracts from the character and significance of the listed building. Installing a solid glazed first floor element (as per the building on the southern end of the terrace) would not be appropriate given the proposed first floor use of the building as an Aparthotel and, as such, proposals seek to create a more solid arrangement with two new timber windows surrounded by terracotta detailed and set within a brick infill panel. All materials and detailing would be to match the existing building. While this arrangement would not be reflective of the original first floor detailing of the building it would be wholly appropriate in terms of its form, materials, character and detailing and would provide a symmetrical entrance to Queen Victoria Street from the north with the matching building to the east. Overall these works would represent an enhancement to the architectural interest of the listed terrace.

Demolition of rear outbuildings

- 5.13** As noted in the preceding section, existing built form located to the rear of the site comprises a series of late 19th and 20th century structures which historically served 147 Friar Street.
- 5.14** The demolition of the existing 20th century modern built form, which are poor quality and detracting in their form and appearance, would not affect the heritage significance of the identified listed buildings. Instead, the removal of these structures offers an opportunity for enhancement to the rear of the site.
- 5.15** The two 19th century components (a three storey building store and a two storey building cabinet factory) do contribute to the significance of no.147. While not of any special interest in their own right, the demolition of these buildings would have limited some effect on the significance of this building due to the loss of the former ancillary structures. Though being broadly contributory to the setting of the Queen Victoria Street terrace, these buildings do not make any marked contribution to the significance of this asset and demolition would not result in any material harm. It is relevant to note that the main rear elevation of Queen Victoria Street will be retained and integrated into the interior of the new extension.

5.16 Overall, while there would be some effect on 147 Friar Street through the loss of its 19th century former ancillary buildings, it is relevant to note that there was no in principle objection to these works as part of the pre-application discussions. It is also relevant that these works are essential in order to achieve the wider goal of reinvigorate a series of currently unused heritage assets within Reading town centre and the wider heritage benefits of the scheme.

Introduction of new built form within the courtyard

5.17 Within the courtyard, following the demolition of existing outbuildings proposals entail the provision of built form including i) an extension to the rear of the listed buildings to provide additional footprint at ground and upper floors, and ii) new courtyard structures forming an open market square to create a new, accessible public space.

Rear extension to the listed buildings

5.18 In order to provide sufficient levels of accommodation on upper floors (proposed to function as an Aparthotel) an extension to the rear of the site's listed buildings is proposed.

5.19 As previously noted, the rear of 1-13 Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friary Street is of a very basic and rudimentary design, lacking the embellishment of elsewhere on the terrace, due to their poor-quality design and modern unsightly alterations, these rear elevations are of low significance. The rear elevation to 147 Friar Street has been considerably extended and altered during the 1930s.

5.20 While the introduction of a full width extension to the listed building would be a noticeable change to the rear of the listed buildings it is considered that the rear elevation, due to its limited quality, possesses scope for such an extension in this case. It is acknowledged that extension, by virtue of its scale and the way in which it would obscure the rear elevations of the buildings, would result in some harm to the significance of the grade II listed building. However, this is primarily resulting from the loss of the rear elevation of no.15 Queen Victoria Street which is relatively intact and of some heritage significance retaining an attractive brick frontage.

- 5.21** It is important to note that the main rear elevation will be retained and exposed within the new extension, sustaining legibility of the building's historic form. Furthermore, the proposals have been designed to minimise interruption to built fabric. For example, the new corridor is set to the rear of the building, utilising existing windows to pass through party walls to keep change to a minimum.
- 5.22** In order to retain legibility and subservience with the new built form, the extension is proposed to sit below the eaves level of the existing building, retaining the historic roof form, with the two elements separated via a recessed gutter. Elements including the glazed lift core and circulation space, furthermore, have been carefully sited outside of the host building envelope to further preserve its legibility and integrity.
- 5.23** The new design to the rear of the main building offers a clear enhancement to the appearance and experience of the rear yard. Architecturally, the new extension has been heavily informed by the high quality frontage of the Queen Victoria Street terrace alongside the more intact parts of the rear elevations.. It draws on the articulation, strong vertical emphasis and relationship between floors established by the principle façade, providing a more contemporary, restrained, reference to that earlier form. This is achieved by establishing a repetitious bay rhythm reflecting the paired sash window bays on the front façade all executed with a restrained material palette of red brick and stone. The rear elevation makes use of smaller proportioned dormers, simplified eaves detailing, simplified banding and cornices, window surrounds and colonnade. This not only draws from the established pattern of the host building but balances this with the need to retain a more subservient rear yard character whilst increasing vibrancy of this area.
- 5.24** Overall, while some harm would be incurred through the provision of an extension of this scale in this location, good design would offer an aesthetic enhancement to this part of the site and help mitigate any harm.

New Market Place Built Form

- 5.25** The introduction of replacement built form of part one and part two storeys within the courtyard area and the transformation of this space to a publicly accessible market square have the opportunity to enhance the functionality of the space and the quality of built form present on the site.

- 5.26** New built form is proposed to be of a subservient form and appearance, stepping down from the main building. Architecturally, the character of the courtyard built form at ground floor continues the established character of the rear elevation with brick colonnade and well detailed shopfronts. The first floor portions have been provided with a more contemporary character making use of large areas of glazing and, in accordance with pre-application advice, a pitched roof. The design of this first floor section ensures that the new courtyard built form does not demand undue attention away from the listed buildings or affect the overall back of house character to this part of the site whilst still providing a more inviting and vibrant place to be.
- 5.27** Overall, due to the appropriate scale, carefully considered and high-quality built form, the introduction of new part one, part two storey commercial built form on this part of the site would not affect the heritage significance of the grade II listed buildings on the site.

Internal Alterations to the Listed Buildings

- 5.28** As part of the proposed development, internal alterations are proposed to the site's listed buildings necessitated by the changes of use proposed and the various extensions etc. These changes are discussed in more detail below (with reference to the **Schedule of Work**, SoW hereafter) but, prior to that assessment it is useful (with reference to the Significance and Phasing Plans) to consider the following:
- 147 Friar Street: The interiors of 147 Friar Street are, to all floors, heavily altered. Plan form is primarily open but there are some mid 20th century partitions alongside limited remnants of earlier fabric.
 - 1-3 Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friar Street: This part of the grade II listed terrace has been almost entirely stripped of partitions providing an open plan layout with a number of late 20th commercial and office partitions introduced throughout.
 - 5-15 Queen Victoria Street: This part of the terrace retains more of its general compartmentalised arrangement which is evidenced by party walls, original room proportions, staircases and plan form all of which contribute to significance.

- 5.29** This assessment of the building alongside a detailed understanding of surviving historic fabric has informed the internal alterations proposed. Wherever possible the intention has been to retain historic fabric and detailing, preserve the legibility of original plan form and focus change on already altered areas.
- 5.30** In all parts of the site, proposals for the detailed service arrangements for the rooms will be completed post approval and to be submitted to the council for approval. However, the anticipated approach is to make use of existing risers and site services within ceiling voids to minimise disruption or alterations to existing joists and walls.

147 Friar Street

- 5.31** Specific changes to this part of the building are covered in more detail within Sections **147.Ba.A-B, 147.G.A-B, 147.1.A-D, 147.2.A-D and 147.3.A-D of the SoW** (pages 6, 13, 24, 42 and 61). The below assessment does not detail every alteration to this part of the building but instead, in tandem with the SoW, provides a detailed appraisal of the impacts of the work on the significance of the listed building.
- 5.32** As identified above and as shown on the Significance Plans, the interiors of 147 Friar Street are heavily altered. The space is predominantly open plan but a number of early to mid 20th century partitions alongside limited remnants of earlier 19th century fabric.
- 5.33** The main change to this building as a whole involves the removal of the 1930s rear lift and staircase. As noted earlier in the report, these are not part of the original phase of the building's construction but it is acknowledged that these early additions are of some wholly limited value in their own right. While the loss of this 1930s fabric could be considered to result in some impact on the significance of the building, the works would be beneficial as a whole thus outweighing the harm caused. This is because a more coherent and architecturally appropriate flush rear building line (as per the building's original design) could be reinstated to the grade II listed building. At upper floors where possible existing elements of the rear elevation would be retained and new built form of a matching design introduced.

- 5.34** At basement level proposals involve the replacement of existing modern partitions with new partitions to create a more functional commercial layout. Given the modern nature of partitions and layout present here these proposals would not affect the significance of the building.
- 5.35** The building's ground floor is heavily altered with a new early to mid 20th century splayed shopfront layout added behind the 1880s shopfront. Proposals seek to remove the spayed units and provide two rectangular commercial units both with an active street frontage. No historic fabric would be lost as a result of this alteration and while there would be a change to the character of the ground floor the commercial character of the building would be retained alongside all historic elements of the shopfront including the tall columns. Effects as a result of shopfront alterations are discussed above but in general these proposals would not affect the significance of the grade II listed building.
- 5.36** At the upper floors new commercial and (limited to part of the first floor only) residential accommodation layouts are proposed within the currently mostly open plan part of the building. Wherever possible the proposals retain the historic (late 19th century and 1930s) layout and preserves a sense of the historic legibility of the building and retains what limited historic fabric survives. Of particular note is that the exposed roof trussed and timbers present within the third floor (see **Photographs 139 – 147 of the SoW**) are retained as exposed within these parts of the building. Overall, these works, alongside the reinstatement of a compartmentalised arrangement to the grade II listed building, represent an enhancement to the significance of this building.
- 5.37** In order to ensure that the new staircase serving the upper floors of the site's listed buildings can provide DDA compliant access a new dormer is proposed to the rear of 147 Friar Street. This dormer is located within a much changed part of the building affecting either modern or heavily altered fabric only. Without the introduction of the dormer window, alterations and removal of the building's third floor trusses would be required which would result in harm to the significance of the listed building.
- 5.38** Overall, while the loss of the 1930s lift and stair core would result in some impact on the significance of the grade II listed building, this wholly limited effect should be balanced against the beneficial elements of the scheme which, in respect of 147

Friar Street, are material. These beneficial works include the reinstatement of an appropriate and coherent rear elevation, the preservation of historic partitions where present, the introduction of appropriate decorative features within the main spaces and the introduction of a compartmentalised internal arrangement which is more appropriate in comparison to the existing open plan layout which represents an enhancement.

1-3 Queen Victoria Street

- 5.39** Specific changes to this part of the building are covered in more detail within Sections **1.Ba.A, 3.Ba.A, 1.G.A, 3.G.A, 148.1.A, 1.1.A, 3.1.A-B, 148.2.A, 1.2.A, 3.2.A-B, 148.3.A, 1.3.A, 3.3.A-B of the SoW** (pages 6, 13, 24-25, 42-43 and 61-62). The below assessment does not detail every alteration to this part of the building but instead, in tandem with the SoW, provides a detailed appraisal of the impacts of the work on the significance of this part of the listed terrace.
- 5.40** As noted above, this part of the grade II listed terrace has been almost entirely stripped of partitions providing an open plan layout with a number of late 20th partitions introduced to the commercial basement and ground floors and the upper floors which have most recently been in office use. Party walls have been removed and only one staircase (within no.3) survives. This staircase has been replaced at lower floors but retains some early 20th century fabric to the upper floor (see **Photograph 172 of the SoW**).
- 5.41** Due to the level of alteration and presence on modern fabric in this part of the terrace the internal spaces are of no heritage value. Proposals to these spaces involve the removal of existing modern partitions and provision of new commercial and residential layouts. While the removal of the staircase would result in the loss of some historic fabric, given the changes to this part of the building and the staircase itself any effect on the building's plan form, legibility and significance would be wholly limited.
- 5.42** Overall, given the modern nature of the current layouts and lack of historic fabric present within these spaces, the internal alterations proposed to 1-3 Queen Victoria Street works would not affect the heritage significance of the listed building in any way.

5-15 Queen Victoria Street

5.43 Specific changes to this part of the building are covered in more detail within Sections **5-15.Ba.A, 5-15.G.A, 15.G.B, 5-15.1.A-B, 5-15.2.A-B and 5-15.3.A-B of the SoW** (pages 6, 14-15, 25-27, 43-45 and 62-63). The below assessment does not detail every alteration to this part of the building but instead, in tandem with the SoW, provides a detailed appraisal of the impacts of the work on the significance of this part of the listed terrace.

5.44 Within the basement and ground floor commercial parts of 5-15 Queen Victoria Street change has historically occurred which has eroded the historic legibility of these spaces. Such changes include the loss of party walls, loss of internal partitions and replacement of various staircases. Across the ground and basement levels of this building proposals involve:

- The removal of modern shop fittings and partitions;
- Retention of existing staircases serving the basement from nos. 5, 6 and 9. The basement staircase to no.5 in particular appears to be part of the building's original construction (see **Photographs 16 and 38 of the SoW**); and
- Retention of existing party walls and where present, historic spine walls.

5.45 As a whole, these proposals seek to preserve key elements of the plan form and character of the building within these much altered floors ensuring that the once separate character of the 6 retail units is respected.

5.46 As noted above, the upper floors of 5-15 Queen Victoria Street retains more of its general compartmentalised arrangement which is evidenced by party walls, spine walls original room proportions, staircases and plan form all of which contribute to significance. In order to preserve a sense of historic legibility within this part of the terrace these elements of the building are to be retained and incorporated within the residential accommodation wherever possible.

5.47 While the intention has been to retain historic fabric wherever possible, there are a number of areas where historic fabric needs to be removed in order to facilitate a functional layouts. Changes are detailed in full on the SoW and key changes discussed below:

- **Staircases:** As identified at pre-application stage a number of staircases are proposed to be removed as they do not facilitate a practical layout within the building. Original staircases are present within no.5 and no.9 (**Photographs 77 and 86 of the SoW**) and proposals seek to retain the no.5 staircase as a functional element of vertical circulation. However, the staircase at no.9 is proposed to be removed as it cannot be readily incorporated into the residential layout without removal of a number of apartments. The loss of this original and broadly intact staircase will result in a degree of harm (less than substantial) to the significance of the grade II listed building. Other staircases within nos.7 and 13 (**Photograph 67 of the SoW**) are either modern or heavily altered to the point they are of no heritage value. While the removal of these elements of vertical circulation will have some effect on the building's plan form and legibility this effect would be wholly limited.
- **Party walls:** Throughout 5-15 Queen Victoria Street proposals seek to retain existing party walls between the formerly separate 6 units, thus preserving historic fabric and plan form and legibility. There are some existing breaches present within the party walls at various upper levels and proposals seek to rebuild structure in these areas reinstating the building's lost element of plan form and circulation. These works are wholly beneficial to the significance of the grade II listed building.
- **Spine walls:** Where present within 5-15 Queen Victoria Street existing historic spine walls (the wall dividing the front and rear rooms on upper levels) is retained in situ. While some new door openings are proposed within the spine walls the minor loss of associated historic fabric would not be sufficient to result in harm to the significance of the building and the retention of the majority of these key elements of plan form preserve a sense of historic legibility within the spaces.
- **Chimney breasts:** All chimney breasts within nos.5-15 are retained and kept free of obstructing build form. Retention of spine walls and reinstatement of party walls will enable the chimney breasts (though no fire surrounds are present) to once again be the focal point of rooms within this part of the listed terrace.
- **Rear elevation of the terrace:** In order to link this part of the listed terrace to the new rear extension new openings in the original rear elevation of the

building are proposed. As previously discussed the building's rear elevation is heavily altered but proposals seek to retain as much of this part of the building as possible utilising window openings as new door points and retaining this part of the building as a corridor running the length of the new extension. Within 5 Queen Victoria Street the historic window serving the stair core is retained as exposed within the corridor. Overall, these works have ensured a limited loss of historic fabric and preservation of the character of the rear of the building.

5.48 As identified in the above, the internal alterations to 5-15 Queen Victoria Street will result in some harm to the significance of the grade II listed building primarily as a result of changes to the building's plan form and the loss of an original staircase. However, these works are essential to facilitate the viable re-use of the building and wider site and wherever possible the harm incurred has been minimised by careful design. Additionally, the internal proposals to this part of the listed terrace also include a number of heritage benefits which can weigh against the harm incurred. These beneficial works include partial restoration of lost elements of plan form and the reinstatement of appropriate period detailing (for example fire surrounds, cornices and skirting boards etc.) where those elements are missing.

Summary and policy compliance

5.49 The proposed development can be summarised as the comprehensive redevelopment of the site to provide a high quality commercial and visitor accommodation use that will reinvigorate a series of currently underused heritage assets (and halt decay to these assets) within Reading town centre. Specific works required to achieve this are discussed above in detail but can be summarised as:

- External alterations to halt deterioration;
- Works to provide appropriate consistent shopfronts and signage;
- Replacement of the rear outbuildings with an extension to the terrace and new built form in the courtyard forming an open market square to create a new, accessible public space; and

- Internal alterations to the buildings to facilitate commercial ground floor upper floors to convert the spaces into an Aparthotel.

5.50 As detailed above, it is acknowledged that the proposals result in some identified harm to the significance of the two listed buildings (147 Friar Street and the Queen Victoria Street terrace). This harm primarily stems from the loss of the outbuildings, provision of a rear extension and a small number of internal alterations which result in loss of plan form and historic fabric. Taking into account the significance of the buildings and design mitigation discussed above, this harm would be commensurate with a medium level of less than substantial harm (**Appendix 1**).

5.51 In accordance with paragraph 196 of the NPPF should be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme. Public benefits associated with the scheme and the wider balance needed for paragraph 196 are considered within the Planning Statement. However, there are also considerable heritage benefits that would, in accordance with paragraph 020 of the PPG, weigh into the wider planning balance as follows:

- Preventing further deteriorating to the listed buildings, specifically 1-15 Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friar Street, which are currently in a deteriorating condition with the highly significant frontage at risk of collapse;
- Reviving the currently underused and predominantly vacant heritage assets by providing the listed buildings with an active viable use that will see for their future conservation and maintenance;
- Reinstatement of appropriate and in-keeping shopfronts throughout the site, thus enhancing the significance and authenticity of the listed buildings;
- Removal of poor-quality additions to the rear of the buildings, many of which are currently abutted directly against the rear elevation of the listed buildings;
- Retention and restoration of key elements of heritage significance, for example the important facades, original staircases and elements of historically legible plan form; and
- Opportunities to reinstate appropriate detailing (fire surrounds, cornices and skirting boards etc.) in those areas of the listed building (primarily 5-15 Queen Victoria Street) which, internally, retain a higher degree of survival and plan form.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1** This Heritage Statement has been prepared in accordance with paragraph 189 of the NPPF and is submitted alongside an application for planning permission and listed building consent for a heritage led redevelopment of 147 Friar Street and 148 Friar Street & 1-15 Queen Victoria Street, Reading. This report provides a proportionate assessment of the significance of the application site and this is followed by an assessment of the effect of the proposals on that significance.
- 6.2** The Queen Victoria Street terrace (including 148 Friar Street and 1-15 Queen Victoria Street) is a building of considerable architectural quality, primarily deriving from the quality and form of its front elevation which includes brickwork, terracotta, decorative gables, granite pilasters and original windows. While its significance has been affected by virtue of poor quality shopfronts but the building remains a good example of an early 20th century commercial premises and this bestows a degree of historic (illustrative and associative) interest.
- 6.3** The significance of 147 Friar Street primarily relates to the architectural quality of the 1880s front elevation, particularly the double height colonnade shopfront and the 3no. segmental headed dormer windows that feature moulded coping between and modillion cornices. As with the Queen Victoria Street terrace, the building is a good example of a late 19th century commercial premises
- 6.4** To the rear of the building are a variety of extensions and additions historically associated with 147 Friar Street. Elements of built form which are 19th century in date are of some limited value while more recent built form possesses either neutral or negative role in the heritage values of the listed building.
- 6.5** The proposed scheme of works is based on an understanding of the significance, character, historic development and surviving historic fabric of the grade II listed buildings on the site. The proposals have been designed to provide a new viable use for the site and its listed building that will be sensitive to the significance of the identified assets and also revive the currently underused heritage assets
- 6.6** The redevelopment as proposed will result in both positive and negative impacts on the significance of the grade II listed buildings. Negative effects primarily relate to

the scale of demolition and new built form proposed in the form of rear extensions, however, wherever possible, such effects have been mitigated, if not avoided, by sympathetic design that respects the assets' significance. Beneficial elements of the scheme are outlined in the preceding section and represent considerable enhancements to the listed buildings in terms of their scope and nature. They can be summarised as:

- Preventing further deteriorating to the listed buildings, specifically 1-15 Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friar Street, which are currently in a deteriorating condition with the highly significant frontage at risk of collapse;
- Reviving the currently underused and predominantly vacant heritage assets by providing the listed buildings with an active viable use that will see for their future conservation and maintenance;
- Reinstatement of appropriate and in-keeping shopfronts throughout the site, thus enhancing the significance and authenticity of the listed buildings;
- Removal of poor-quality additions to the rear of the buildings, many of which are currently abutted directly against the rear elevation of the listed buildings, to be replaced with a new extension and public market that provides a contemporary reference to the established historic architectural pattern, creating a more inviting and accessible space
- Retention and restoration of key elements of heritage significance, for example the important facades, original staircases and elements of historically legible plan form; and
- Opportunities to reinstate appropriate detailing (fire surrounds, cornices and skirting boards etc.) in those areas of the listed building (primarily 5-15 Queen Victoria Street) which, internally, retain a higher degree of survival and plan form.

6.7

Overall, any harm to the significance of the listed buildings would be less than substantial in NPPF terms (a medium level of less than substantial in accordance with **Appendix 1**). Application of paragraph 196 of the NPPF requires the harm to be balanced against the benefits (both public and heritage) secured by the development. Conservation is the process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance. In this case the most significant aspects of the buildings, their external

form and appearance and the vast majority of their historic fabric and surviving plan form, will be retained and where possible enhanced.

6.8

The Planning Statement (Town Planning Bureau, 2021) presents an assessment of the planning balance, weighing the identified harm against the public and heritage benefits secured by the scheme. It concludes that, for the purposes of paragraph 196 of the NPPF, the considerable benefits of the scheme outweigh the identified harm. This results in a scheme which is found to be compliant with local and national planning policy (as outlined in Section 2) and, being informed by the significance of the assets, results in considerable heritage benefits. As such, there would be preservation for the purpose of the decision maker's duty under sections 16 and 66 of the Act.

Appendix 1

Scale of Harm (HCUK, 2019)

The table below has been worked up by HCUK Group (2019) based on current policy and guidance. It is intended as simple and effect way to better define harm and the implications of that finding on heritage significance. It draws on various recent appeal decisions and reflects the increasing importance being put on the contribution of setting to significance and the need to create a greater level of clarity within the finding of less than substantial harm (see the NPPF, paragraph 194-196). This has been proving more and more necessary and the table below goes some way to reflect the most recent updates (2019) to the guidance set out within the NPPG¹³

Scale of Harm	
Total Loss	Total removal of the significance of the designated heritage asset.
Substantial Harm	Serious harm that would drain away or vitiate the significance of the designated heritage asset
Less than Substantial Harm	High level harm that could be serious, but not so serious as to vitiate or drain away the significance of the designated heritage asset.
	Medium level harm, not necessarily serious to the significance of the designated heritage asset, but enough to be described as significant, noticeable, or material.
	Low level harm that does not seriously affect the significance of the designated heritage asset.

Heritage Collective, 2019

It is recognised that not all parts of a heritage asset will necessarily be of equal significance. In some cases, certain aspects or elements could accommodate change without affecting the government's objectives, which include 'intelligently managed change' and which seeks to

¹³ See NPPG 2019. Section: 'How can the possibility of harm to a heritage asset be assessed?'. Paragraph 3, under this heading notes that '*within each category of harm (which category applies should be explicitly identified), the extent of the harm may vary and should be clearly articulated.*'

ensure decisions are based on the nature, extent and level of significance of those heritage assets affected.

Change is only considered to be harmful where it erodes or negatively affects a heritage asset's significance. Understanding the significance of any heritage asset (along with any contribution made by its setting) is, therefore, fundamental to understanding the ability for the asset to accept change.

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