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HERITAGE STATEMENT

**150 FRIAR STREET
READING
RG1 1HE**

Prepared by:
RS Designs
September 2021

Job Ref: RSD2471

Please read this report in conjunction with the drawings submitted as part of the Full Planning Application.

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Heritage Assees and its Setting:

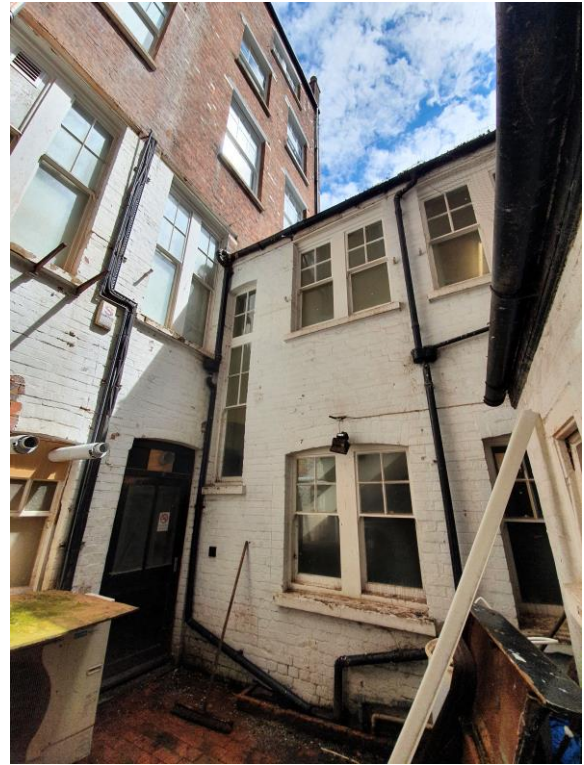
The property at 150 Friar Street, Reading RG1 1HE is designated as a Grade II listed building for its Architectural and historical interest, the property is also located within an Air Quality Management Area and a Smoke Control Zone. The listing entry under Historical England is 1113564.

Project Overview:

Proposed change of use from a retail shop (currently vacant) to a fast-food establishment with installation of new front signage and extractor vent panel to the rear. New internal fit out including serving counter, extractor system and a disable WC. No other proposed works to external elevations or upper levels. Current use of upper levels is Offices.



Front elevation photos



Rear Elevation photos

In order to complete the proposed development, the following alterations/interventions will be required:

- Installing new signage over the existing panel above the shop front glazing
- Retention of shop front and carrying out any decoration works.
- Strip out interior of the shop including flooring and false suspended ceiling.
- New internal fit out to be installed as per drawings RSD2471-200, including new floor finishing and new suspended ceiling.
- New kitchen area created with installation of relevant equipment including commercial extractor system.
- New services for lighting and fire detection to be installed within suspended ceiling, no penetration to existing original ceiling line.
- An extractor vent louvered panel to be installed within the rear window, similar to the existing one.
- Now works to upper floors internally or externally
- No works to the basement

Setting Overview:

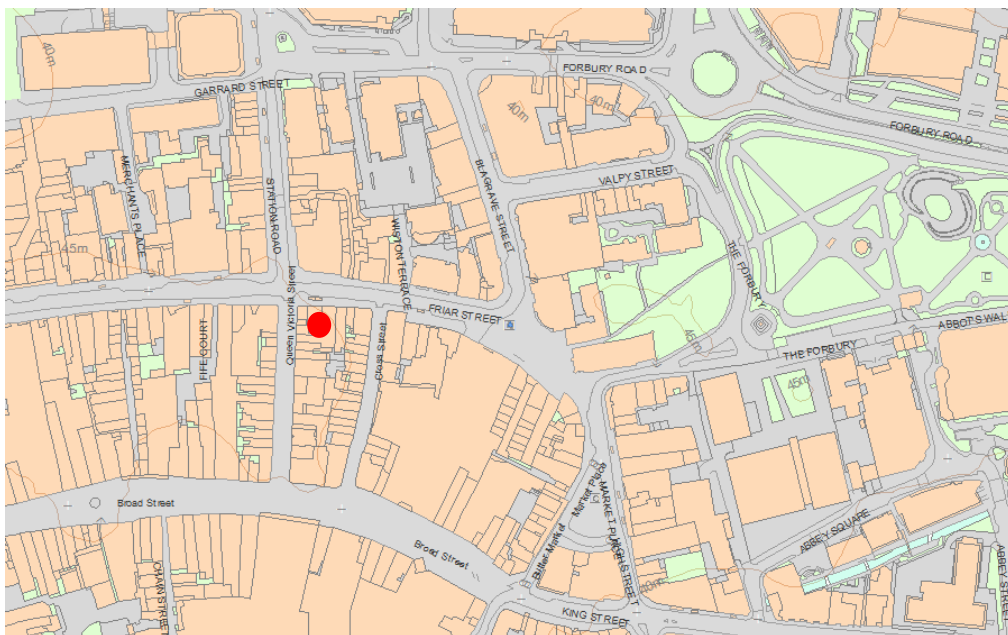
In Georgian times it was incredibly common for market towns to undergo a 'facelift' where medieval timber frame buildings were reclad to look modern in appearance and many of those in the local area would have undergone this treatment.

The building is a Grade II listed building along a main shopping street in Reading Town center. It is densely packed commercial area hosting shop fronts on ground floor level and a mixture of shop amenity, residential and office accommodation above. They are predominantly 3/4 storey in height in a mixture of architectural styles.

The building in question has a modern shopfront at ground floor level with a modern interior with a suspended grid ceiling. There are stairs at the back to the basement leading to a small rear courtyard/lightwell.

The interior is in a terrible condition having been neglected for a while and as it hasn't been used for some time. Unsympathetic ventilation system and existing rear windows have been internally boarded, cutting of natural ventilation and light. The basement is uninhabitable and it is not intended to occupy this space but only to be used to access the rear lightwell space.

There is a separate entrance from the front to another stairwell to access the upper floors. The first, second and third floor is office space, currently occupied by 'Dog House', who have restored/renovated the interior to a modern look.



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

Impacted Heritage Assets:

The building is a Grade II Listed Building. The site falls within an Air Quality Management Area and Smoke Control Zone as defined by Reading Borough Council.

The building is within an area where there is known below ground archaeology, notably medieval in nature.

Assessment of Significance:

Heritage has cultural, social, economic and environmental values. The attributes that combine to define the significance of a historic building can relate to its properties or to its context. – BS 7913:2013.

The building has a traditional shop front and contributes in a positive manner to the commercial setting and the historic nature of Reading as a market center, and more specifically to the largely fronting building that it is part of facing Queen Victoria Street.

The building use remains as commercial as its design intent although the upper floors seem to be well established as offices. The basement is uninhabitable with low ceilings and suffering hugely from damp however would originally have had purpose. The shop frontage to the ground floor is modern in nature although reflective of a traditional shop frontage.

The building has a small rear courtyard/lightwell which will not be impacted by the proposal.

The building displays Edwardian architecture with Dutch Baroque style façade. The upper levels have retained the original character where as the lower ground has gone through gentle modern transformation.

There is suspected to be high archaeological significance below ground due to the age of known development in this area linking back to the times of Reading Abbey.



The photo of 150 Friar Street in 2001. Ref: Historic England Reading

Development Impact on the Historical Asset:

Building Elevations and Setting: The building has a modern shop front and it is to be retained and hence will not result in the loss of historic fabric. The building is currently vacant which is having a very negative impact upon the shopping high street area and to the building itself. The new occupiers have gone through great lengths to ensure that they are sympathetic to both the building and its setting. We believe the new purpose brings the building back into use and in a sympathetic and respectful manner.

Internally: The building internally has been neglected for a period of time. Hopefully this new use will encourage investment in a positive manner to the other parts of this building which are not currently included within the application. The proposals however intend to provide the best economic use of the ground floor for the new occupants without harming the value of place.

Scale and Massing: There is no impact upon the scale and massing of existing architecture.

Archaeology: There is no impact upon below ground archaeology.

Use: There is new purpose intended for the building however its commercial purpose reflective of the local area and its design intent is being retained. Overall, the impact of the development is minor in nature and in our view, there is no harm to the material value of the place.

Design concept/Reason for Development: To bring new use into a vacant commercial building.

Relevant Policy:

The Government has set out its planning policies for the historic environment in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This was published in March 2012 and replaced in 2018 and 2019. It replaced Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment. The PPS5 Practice Guide remains valid for use alongside the NPPF.

In determining applications, the NPPF explains at paragraph 189 that local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting.

Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of

the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- (a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- (b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- (c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Historic England 'Conservation Principles' deem new work or alteration to be normally acceptable where the proposals do not materially harm the value of the place. They consider the setting of the heritage asset to contribute greatly to its significance. They accept that a heritage setting changes over time.

The local authority guidance also includes policies which seek to ensure the protection of the historic environment and that development is of a high quality and seeks to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Heritage Asset. Changes to the setting of historic buildings / Conservation Areas are to be sympathetic in terms of siting, proportion, scale, form, height, materials and detailing.

Conclusion:

The proposed works bring new commercial use to a vacant building within a busy town centre and positive investment to a Listed Building in a sympathetic manner which should be in general encouraged. Vacant commercial and retail space are identified as having a negative impact upon the market towns.

The changes restore the historic purpose of the shop which would originally have been highly likely selling food products and these changes do not result in material harm to the building. They have no impact upon the scale and massing of the townscape. There is no impact upon the streetscape.

The internal alterations maximise the use of space, securing their viable use as a commercial premise whilst respecting the existing building lines. There is no loss of historic features.

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