

Heritage Statement for the Dog Fountain, Market Place, Reading

Prepared for Reading Bough Council

by

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1 Introduction

1.1 This report is a Heritage Statement assessing the heritage impacts of proposed maintenance works and repair works for the conservation of the “Dog Fountain” in Market Place, Reading. The requirement for this report stems from section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 that places a duty upon the local planning authority in determining applications for development affecting listed buildings to pay special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting. Under section 72, the Act also requires that special attention be given to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

1.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012.

1.2.1 defines a heritage asset as:

“A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest.” (DCLG, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 - Annex 2: Glossary).

1.2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 provides the Government’s national planning policy with regard to the conservation of the historic environment. In respect of information requirements, it sets out:

“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.”

1.2.3 Paragraph 129, then sets out that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of heritage assets that may be affected by proposals, including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of proposals in order to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

2. Project

Reading Borough Council is proposing to carry out maintenance and repairs to a historic fountain in the Market Place, known as the “Dog Fountain”. It is a Grade II listed structure and this Heritage Statement has been prepared to accompany a Listed Building application for maintenance and repair to the Fountain. The, project is being funded by Council’s CIL funding for community amenity projects.

The report has been kept brief in accordance with the recommendations of the NPPF, to provide enough detail as to be able to assess the proposed works and consider the impact on the significance of the host heritage structure (The Drinking Fountain).



Fig. 1. Recent photograph of the “Dogs” Fountain, against the exterior wall of St. Lawrence Church. (RBC: November 2020).

3. Historical Background

The provision of drinking fountains was part of a national movement to provide safe drinking water in towns. The Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Horse Trough Association was founded in 1859 to promote this objective and support also came from temperance sympathisers who saw the fountains as an alternative to the public house.

The Drinking Fountain, commonly known as the “*Dog Fountain*”, allows a look back at Reading’s drinking water supply in the 1860s. There are a few mid-19th century newspaper articles, which refer to the opening of the Fountain (Reading Mercury 28 July 1860 p5), but there are no known photographs. It is understood that it was designed by the architects Poulton and Woodman. The St Laurence drinking fountain was the second to be erected in Reading, and was donated by Mr Thomas Rogers, the clerk to the board of health committee.

When it was formally opened by the mayor, newspaper reports carried glowing descriptions of the beauty of the design and the benefits of the water provided by the fountain.

“It has been admirably executed in Mansfield stone by Messrs Wheeler. The principal basin, which is semi-octagonal in outline, projects from the face of the stone a considerable distance, and bears upon the edge the text from Proverbs 16, “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life”, and is supported by a marble column... In the recess above the upper basin there is an elaborate piece of carving in imitation of a water lily, and nothing could be more perfect than the workmanship... Upon the edge of the canopy is the date of erection, and the name of the donor”. “... Together with a finial which no longer exists, the fountain was 11 feet tall (over 3 metres). At the base of the fountain were two small overflow troughs to provide drinking water for dogs”. (Reading Mercury 28 July 1860 p5.)

It has been restored in relatively recent times in 1990, by Thames Water and Reading Borough Council, but is now due for more conservation works, 30 years hence.

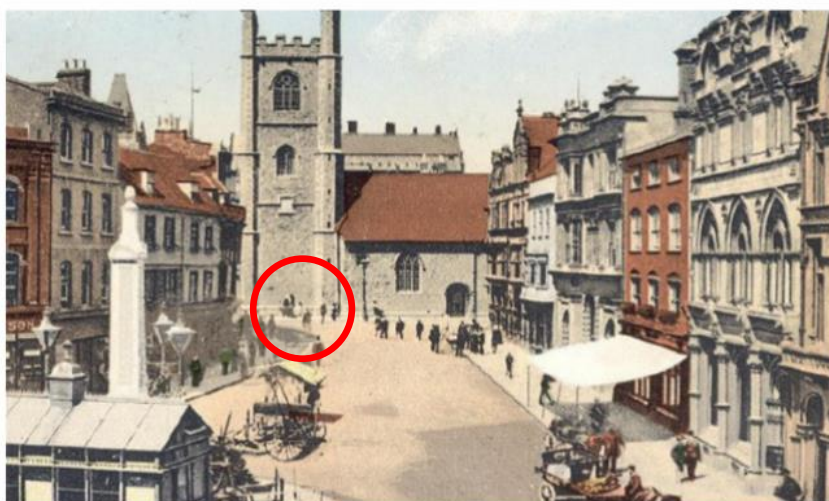


Fig 2. photo c. 1904 showing the Dog Fountain.

4. The location and setting



Fig. 3. Location Plan

- 4.1 The Dog Fountain is located on the South-West exterior corner of The St Laurence Church, and is part of The Market Place Square.
- 4.2 **Listed Buildings:** There are a number of listed buildings in the vicinity of Market Place: The fountain is surrounded by 4 Listed buildings and attached to a Grade 1 listed Church. The works are considered only maintenance and will have no impact on the significance and character of the listed buildings.
- 4.3 **Conservation Area: Market Place / London Street**
The Site (Dog Fountain attached to the SW corner of St Lawrence Church, is located within the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area, which was first designated by Reading Borough Council in 1972. The Market Place / London Street Conservation Area Appraisal document was adopted by Reading Borough Council in 2007. The works are considered only maintenance and will have no impact on the significance and character of the listed buildings.

5. Statement of significance

The listing description from Historic England is included below:

Name: DRINKING FOUNTAIN ON SOUTH SIDE OF ST LAURENCE'S TOWER

Designation Type: Listing

Grade: II

List UID: 1156250

DETAILS:

“MARKET PLACE 1. 5128 Drinking Fountain on south side of St Laurence's Tower SU 7173 NE 1/332 26.7.73. II GV 2. Mid C19 Victorian Gothic drinking fountain. Stone with large bowl and 2 small dog bowls below. Panel of floral bas-relief carving under Gothic trefoil hood with crocketed gable overall which carries bas-relief carving of a deer. (A reference to Psalm 42).” (Historic England Website, December 2020).

6. Photos of the Dog Fountain taken in November 2020.

This site was inspected by the RBC Conservation & Urban Design Officer (Bruce Edgar), in November and December to investigate the existing condition and compare it with the documentation that has been prepared.

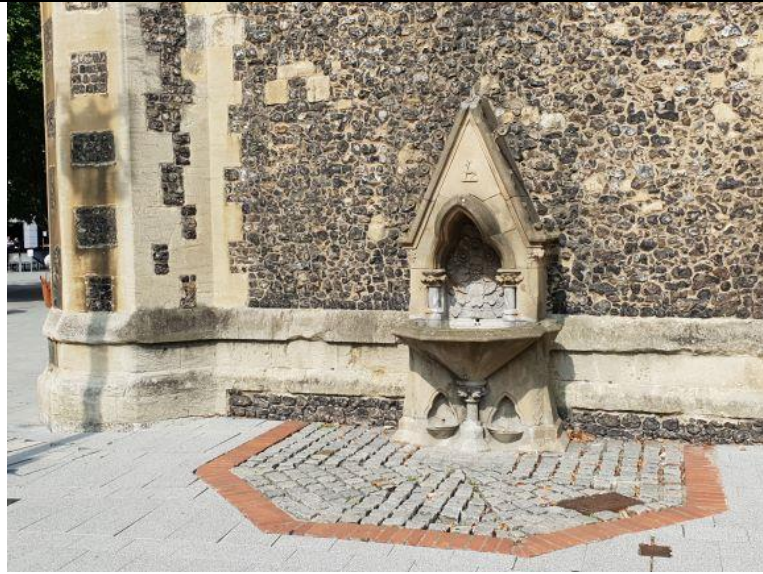


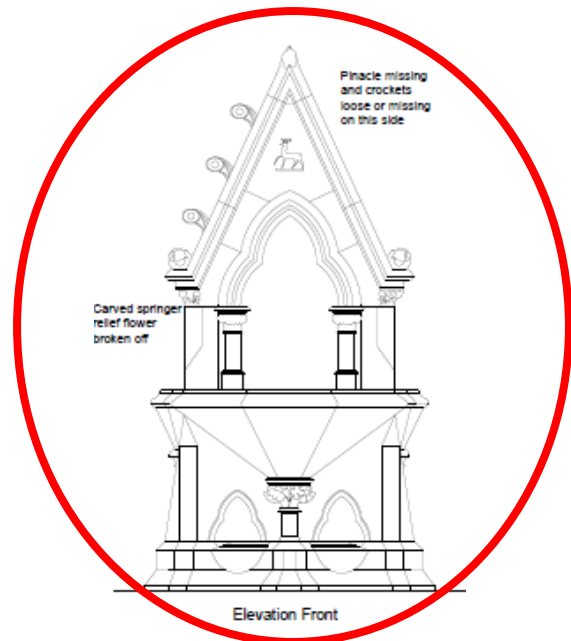
Fig 4. General photo of Dog Fountain and flint stone wall of St Lawrence to which it is attached. (RBC. 2020)



Fig 5. Photo of 1990 conservation works plaque. Joint project by Reading Borough Council and Thames Water. (RBC. 2020)



Fig 6. General photo of Dog Fountain. (RBC. 2020)



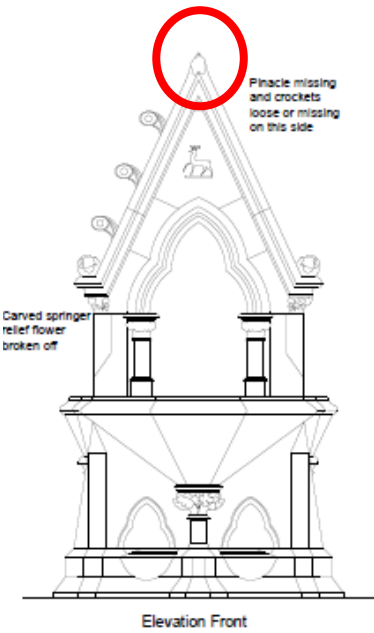


Fig 7. Missing top finial stone details missing. (RBC. 2020)

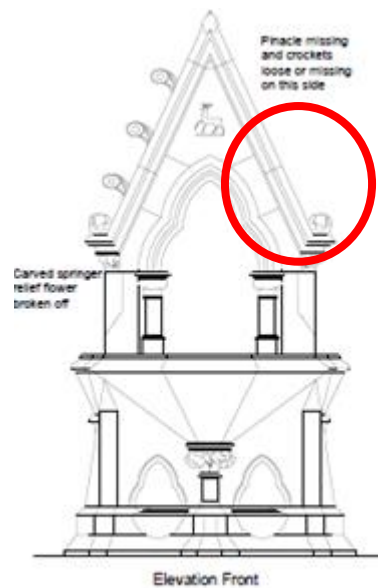


Fig 8. Decorative carved details that need to be reinstated. Cut out and or pinned in place as stated in repair schedule. (RBC. 2020)

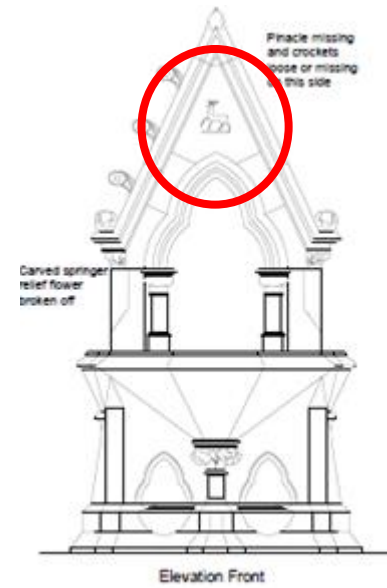


Fig 9. Top panel showing an example of failed pointing. It needs to be cut out by hand and repointed in soft lime mortar. (RBC. 2020)

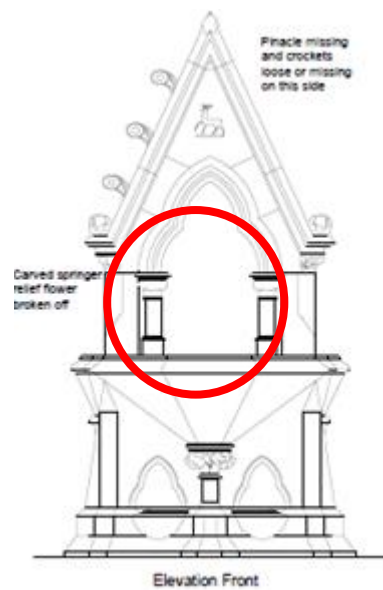


Fig 9. Water - lilies decoration, in reasonable condition. (RBC. 2020)

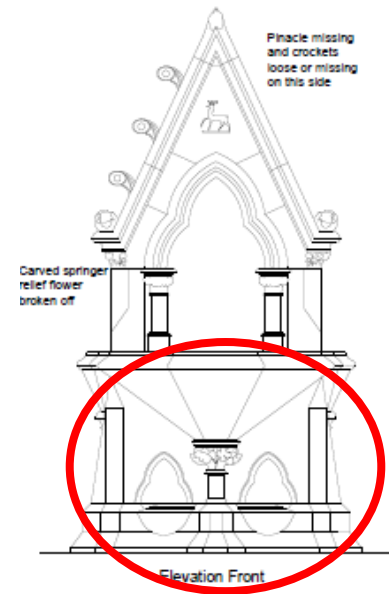


Fig 10. A pair of bowls at bottom for dogs to have a drink.
(RBC. 2020)

7. Proposed works

The proposed works are described in detail in the following documents, and this report should be read in conjunction with them:

- a) the stone masons Outline Scope of Works (Report & Costs), prepared by A. F. Jones, dated November, 2007. This has been recently checked to ensure the extent of the proposed works are still correct.
- b) Two recent drawings, showing existing and proposed works, prepared by HCC Property Services, dated November, 2020.

Generally, the stonework is in good condition, where it has not been vandalised. However, there are some areas which require repointing, and the stone requires gentle cleaning to remove some areas of grime. Essentially, the works proposed are “like for like”, but there are some reinstatements where detailed elements have been removed.

A synopsis of the Conservation Repair Methodology proposed by Stone Mason is shown below:

“The structure is a Victorian Gothic design, perhaps Pugin inspired, with carved capitals, crockets, and back panel with a very ornate but missing carved finial.

It is with regard with to the vandalised elements that this report is mainly based and should not be regarded as a conservation of a historic structure, more of a repair of ‘Like for Like’ materials. ... We suggest, where possible that areas of replacement be in natural sandstone be used and not resin castings. (This is more permanent and better lasting).

The stone type is Ancaster Hard White limestone, from Lincolnshire, which takes carving and weathers very well. Stone replacements should be made in this stone.

All joints should be raked out by hand, and repointed in soft lime mortar.

When completed the stone work should be carefully cleaned. (Water wash and no acids to be used.).

The exact details of the works required are identified and shown on the accompanying stone mason’s report and drawings by HCC property services.

These two contractors are experienced in heritage conservation services and supported.

8. Impact on significance

The proposed works are required as part of the on-going care and maintenance of this significant heritage feature which has long a part of Market place. They are generally like for like repairs and are being carried by qualified contractors, who have extensive experience in this type of conservation work. The works are considered in NPPF terms to be an enhancement of the significance and character of the host structure. It will not cause harm and would be a benefit in preserving the fountain. The works are considered, not to have any impact on archaeology, as it is only related to the existing structure. The works are supported and are being carried out as part of the Reading Borough Council CIL projects for improvement of public spaces and amenity.

9. Conclusion

Conservation works have previous been carried out in 1990. The current proposed work is just part of regular maintenance to conserve the Dog Fountain, in Market Place, Reading. It is essentially, like for like repairs and is supported, as it will help conserve the historic listed fountain, and add to the general amenity of Market Place.

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10. Annexure A - Planning Constraints

The proposed works are considered to be compliant with the following policies and statutory legislation criteria.

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act 1990

- Grade II item. Requires a Listed Building Consent.
- Opposite listed buildings in Market Place.

NPPF

- Section 16 - Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment
This proposal is within the setting of several Designated and Locally Listed Non-designated) Buildings.

Reading Borough Council - Local Plan 2019

- Conservation Area - Market Place
- Policy CC7 - Town Centre
- Policy CR2 - Town Centre - Heritage
- Policy EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- Policy EN2: Areas of Archaeological Significance

Annexure B - References

- i. Market Place Historic Photo, c. 1904.
(Source - Turley Heritage 2016. - Heritage Appraisal Nos 172 -175 Friar Street & Nos. 27-32 Market Place Reading).
- ii. Stone mason's Outline Scope of Works (Report & Costs), prepared by A. F. Jones, dated November, 2007. (This has been recently checked to ensure the extent of the proposed works are still correct.)
- iii. Two recent drawings, showing existing and proposed works, prepared by HCC Property Services, dated November, 2020.
- iv. Berkshire Chronicle 28 July 1860 p5.
- v. Reading Mercury 11 August 1860.
- vi. Berkshire Chronicle 27 November 1860.
- vii. Reading Mercury 26 October 1861.
- viii. Reading Mercury 2 June 1866.
- ix. Reading Mercury 9 June 1866 p6.
- x. Reading Mercury 28 July 1860 p5.
- xi. <https://www.whitleypump.net/2017/01/28/twinned-with-the-whitley-pump-st-laurences-drinking-fountain/>
- xii. The Drinking Fountain Association