



READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

Artwork Installation

Vacant site to the West of 134 Oxford Road,
Reading RG1 7NL

Planning Statement

28 May 2021



Image capture: Oct 2020 (c) 2021 Google

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement has been prepared by Corporate Property Services and is submitted in support of an application on behalf of the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, Reading Borough Council for Full Planning Permission to install Artwork on existing metal railings on a vacant site to the West of 134 Oxford Road, Reading, RG1 7NL.
- 1.2 The property is owned by Reading Borough Council and operated by Network and Parking Services.
- 1.3 The area of the development site is 20 square metres and is located on the southern boundary of the former Central Pool Car Park (now known as Battle Street Car Park). The land is located within the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area and the Abbey Ward of Reading.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 Last year Reading was awarded £9,231 from Historic England to initiate a cultural pilot project around the Oxford Road. The project was developed as a spring board for the wider High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) programme.
- 2.2 High Street Heritage Action Zones (HSHAZ) are a heritage-led regeneration initiative lead by Historic England, working with local councils and the community to create economic growth and improve the quality of life in our historic high streets.
- 2.3 The Council's wider HSHAZ programme is running until 31 March 2024. The project aims to breathe new life into high street areas within the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road, St Mary's Butts/Castle Street, and Market Place/London Street Conservation areas of the town.
- 2.4 The Objectives of the Reading HSHAZ are:
 - To enhance the understanding of Reading's heritage by revealing its hidden histories and to give the community a sense of pride and ownership in developing the town's future.
 - To improve the physical condition and viability of the high streets within the three conservation areas by identifying those properties most at risk and engaging with property owners to help them to restore the buildings, to show them how to maintain the buildings and to share best practice. We want to see premises viably and fully occupied and footfall and customer satisfaction increasing.
 - To develop a comprehensive strategy to improve the public realm across the HSHAZ. The outcome will be a better experience and sense of place for those living or working in or visiting the town centre.
 - To support local businesses, the economy and local community and cultural initiatives by creating a positive sense of place through contributing to the heritage of their high street.
- 2.5 The HSHAZ programme combines three complementary components:
 - **Physical Interventions:** to buildings, including repair, reinstating lost features, supporting the conversion of historic buildings for new uses and improvement of shared spaces, drawing on the lessons learnt in Streets for All.

- **Community Engagement:** giving local communities a key role in deciding what works they want to see happening on their high street and what sort of place they want it to be.
- **Cultural Programme:** activities and events celebrating the history of the high street and its importance to local communities over the generations.

- 2.6 As part of the project, the University of Reading collected residents' stories and memories that would be used as the inspiration for the three new art projects along the Oxford Road. This research has resulted in a new online community exhibition called "Oxford Road Stories" hosted by Reading Museum.
- 2.7 Three local artists were selected by a community panel to produce exciting new art works along the eastern end of Oxford Road, their projects aiming to amplify the local heritage and rich multicultural history of the road.
- 2.8 The artists; Baker Street Productions, Caroline Streatfield and Gemma Anusa have now been commissioned to create new art pieces for the Oxford Road inspired by the Oxford Road Stories. The art pieces will celebrate the history, heritage and vibrancy of culture of Reading's Oxford Road.
- 2.9 Gemma Anusa has been asked to produce the artwork for the railings at the Oxford Road end of the Battle Street Car Park, which is the subject of this Planning Application.

3.0 Heritage Statement

- 3.1 The application site is in the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area. A map of the area is provided in Appendix B.
- 3.2 The Oxford Road is one of the earliest roads leading out of Reading, south of the River Thames, serving as the primary route to Pangbourne and on to Oxford. The Oxford Road character area consists of the Oxford Road corridor between the IDR to the east and the Reading West Railway Bridge at its western end and encompasses a small area of both Prospect Street and Argyle Street directly to the south because of the related housing styles.
- 3.3 Today, this is a vibrant area with an active pedestrian and vehicular traffic route, well known for its array of independent shops which reflect the area's diverse communities.
- 3.4 The streetscape is a mix of 2-and 3-storey buildings consisting of impressive Georgian terraces and stand-alone houses interspersed with Victorian shops and houses along the route.
- 3.5 Along this half-mile route of 19th century heritage buildings on the Oxford Road, forty of the addresses are listed, either singly or collectively as a terrace. Although a general neglect of retail frontages and poorly-maintained, terraced houses is very prevalent along the road, the area's early history is still strongly evident in its 19th century built environment. Solid Arts and Crafts influences are apparent in the many attractive polychrome brick and terracotta façades in the area. The Oxford Road Community School, and houses along the west side of Prospect Street display good terra-cotta embellishment. The first-floor levels above the shops and the residences opposite the retail terrace at the junction with Argyle Road are notable for their colourful polychrome brickwork.
- 3.6 Early 19th century mapping evidence suggests that shops with residential accommodation above them extended westward from the town centre; notably between Alfred Street and Eaton Place and also between Russell Street and Waylen

Street. However, the nature of the shops and services has altered over time, reflective of incoming immigrant populations. The current speciality hair salons, grocers and bakers, along with the estate agents, key cutters, pharmacies and dentists, all serve the needs of the diverse local community and Reading's wider population. Today's businesses are a continuation of the Oxford Road's history of diverse retail services established over many generations.

3.7 The application site for the art work is the boundary fence of a modern car park that once served the Central Swimming Pool. The pool has recently been demolished and the site is to be redeveloped for residential use. The existing railings to the remaining car park provide an ideal opportunity to brighten the appearance of this part of the Oxford Road while celebrating the local history.

3.8 The site of the proposed Artwork Installation is on a busy pedestrian and vehicular traffic route and the diverse nature of the local community and the character of the area makes the application site the ideal location.

4.0 Relevant Planning History

4.1 The development site has no relevant planning application records on the Reading Borough Council Online Planning Website.

5.0 Location of the proposed development

5.1 As part of the brief for artists commissioned to carry out the project, the artwork had to be displayed inside the Oxford Road HSHAZ. The railings at the Oxford Road end of the Battle Street Car Park were chosen due to their central location within the HSHAZ.

5.2 The railings provide easy installation of the piece and also removal at a later date, without damaging the site. Therefore, it was the preferred location compared to the side of a building or walls in the area.

5.3 Due to its central location and being adjacent to the pavement, it will be viewed by many people who walk along the Oxford Road or use the Battle Street Car Park.

6.0 Description of the proposed development

6.1 The proposed Art Installation produced by Gemma Anusa called "Through Your Eyes" will consist of two parts, which will be presented either side of the pedestrian entrance to the car park.

6.2 The content of the design will be two half portrait faces which reflect the diversity of the area, with a gradient skin tone and hair and eye colourings. Embedded into the portraits and background will be quotes, dates, stories that reference the history of the Oxford Road area and the resident's stories and memories, which were collected from the research by the University of Reading.

6.3 The installation will be on display for at least until the end of the Oxford Road HSHAZ project, which would be March 2024.

7.0 Appearance and Materials

7.1 The proposed Art installation will be printed onto ten Di-bond panels, which will be attached to the railings using suitable fixings (see Appendix C for Method Statement).

8.0 Amount

- 8.1 A soft touch will be adopted to ensure that the character of the area is respected. The proposed interventions are minimal and appropriate to fulfil the objectives of the HSHAZ programme.

9.0 Layout

- 9.1 The proposed Art installation will be in two pieces, which will be presented either side of the Oxford Road pedestrian entrance to the car park.

10.0 Scale

- 10.1 The proposed Art installation will be 6m x 2 in length with a height of 1.829m. The new development will have a negligible impact on the existing Street Scene.

11.0 Landscaping

- 11.1 No landscaping is necessary for this development.

12.0 Access

- 12.1 The site has a good level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport.
- 12.2 Pedestrian access to the development is available from the Oxford Road entrance to Battle Street Car Park.
- 12.3 The proposed development will not change or affect the access to the existing car park or the adjacent buildings.
- 12.4 No additional vehicle parking provision is necessary and therefore, a Transport Impact Assessment is not required.

13.0 Conclusion

- 13.1 The proposed development has been designed in accordance with relevant Planning Policies and guidance and seeks to respect the character and appearance of the local area.
- 13.2 Pre-application advice has been sought from Council Planning Officers in respect of this proposed development and the applicant has sought to address all the matters raised in the pre-application response.
- 13.3 The proposed development is part of the High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) programme, which is supported by Planning Officers and will not unduly affect the Street Scene nor any of the original structures within the Conservation Area.
- 13.4 It is therefore considered that the proposed development, being of small scale and located on a vacant plot of land, is unlikely to detract from the character of the adjacent buildings or the area. The development is consequently considered appropriate in this location.

Appendix A

Aerial Photograph of the Development Site



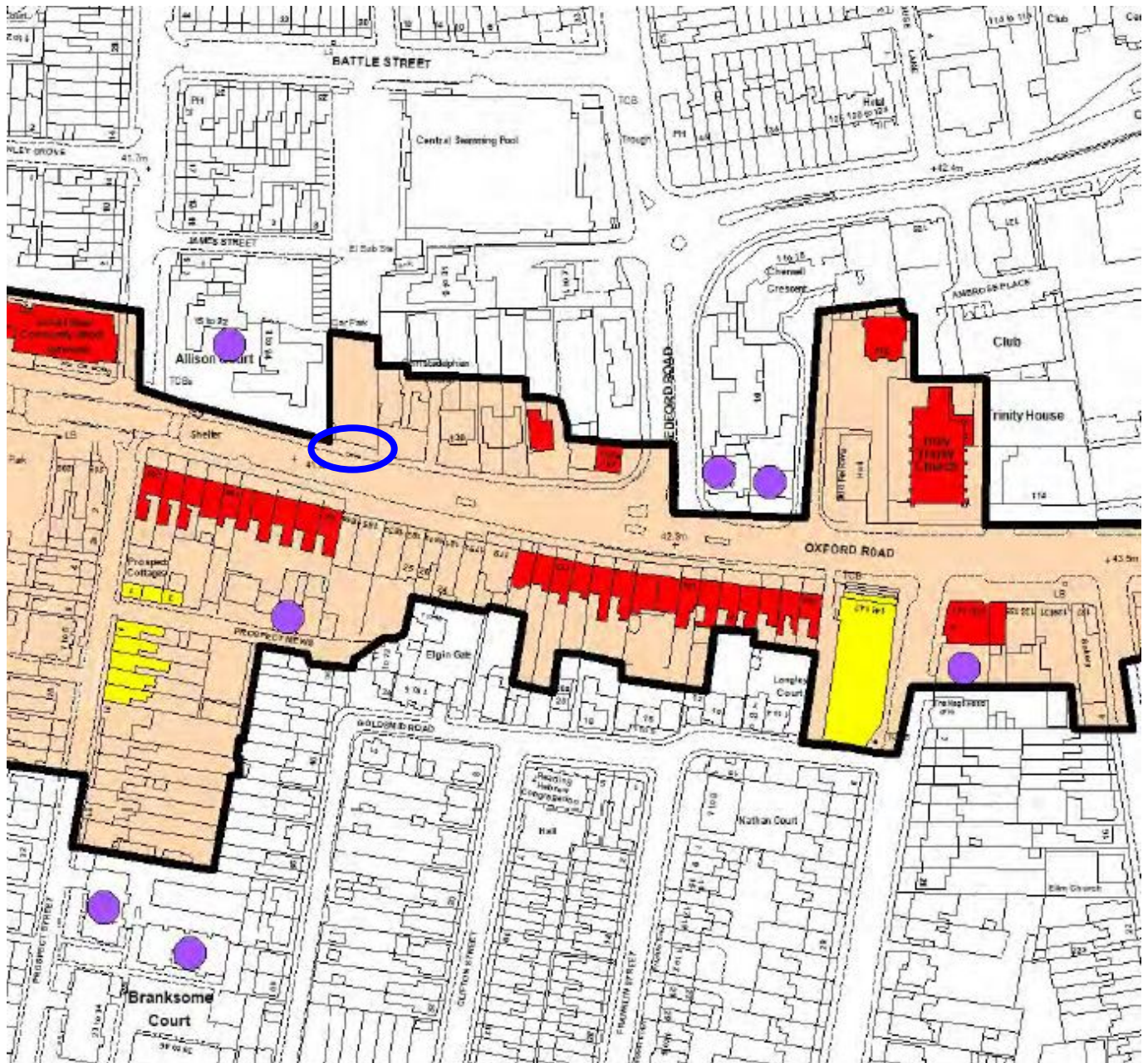
Oxford Road High Street Heritage Action Zone

Project: Proposed Artwork Installation
Title: Aerial Photograph of Site
Scale at A4: 1:500

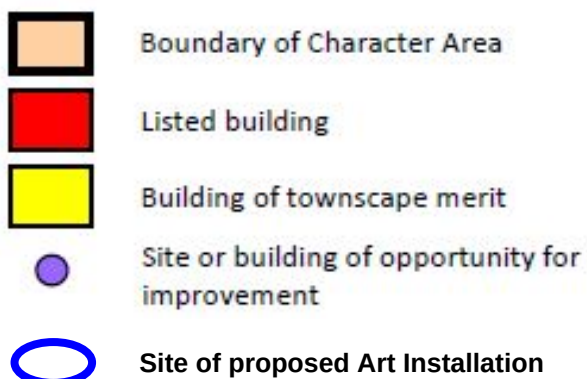
Appendix B

Map of Part of the Castle Hill/RussellStreet/ Oxford Road Conservation Area

Part of the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area



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Appendix C

Method Statement for fixing Art Installation to Railings

METHOD STATEMENT FOR

Project: ANUSA STREET ART

Prepared by: Denny McLaren

Site Address:

Scope of Works:

- Fix timber to public railing then apply artwork by Anusa

Access / Egress:

Access: Public

Pedestrian access: No public access to working area

Vehicular traffic: N/A

Containers / plant and equipment: N/A

Lighting: Natural Daylight

Plant and Equipment used: Power tools

Description / Scope of Works:

2no Operatives to Secure & Fix 4-10 lengths of timber to public railing.

APPENDIX B

Working area will be fenced off from the public at all times when work is being undertaken. Each length of timber will be made secure by fixing the ply into timber noggins on the other side of the railing using timberlock screws. If necessary we will use a step ladder to fix the top fixings.

Once the timber structure is complete operatives will fix are work Di-bond panels to timber using 'stixall' mastic glue & nails

This project will produce no wastage and will take 2 working days to complete.

Summary of Risks identified: SIGNIFICANT HAZARDS ARE TO HAVE RISK ASSESSMENTS PRODUCED. DO NOT PRODUCE PAPERWORK FOR THE SAKE OF PRODUCING PAPERWORK

The following risks have been identified through assessment, control measures are listed on the attached risk assessment:

Manual Handling
Working at Height
Hazardous Substances (I.e. Dusts)
Slips, Trips & Falls

Control of waste and substances hazardous to health

There will be no waste or substances hazardous to health deposited as a result of this operation. All waste will be removed from site by a certified waste carrier.

Lifting Equipment:

N/A

Emergency Arrangements:

Qualified first aiders are on site who can administer initial first aid.

Training:

We are committed to ensuring that all operatives are provided with the correct training to carry out the duties asked of them and that continual evaluations of training requirements is carried out. Certification will be made available on request.

Personal Protective Equipment and clothing

Five Point PPE to be worn used at all times onsite. Dusks mask and hearing protection to be used as required. Task specific PPE will be required as required before commencing associated works.

Supervision/Contact:**The following risk assessments are attached:**

Risk Assessments: For activities included in this method statement

Noise Assessments: Where operative may be exposed to noise levels above the first action level of 80 db (A), a noise assessment will be carried out.

CoSHH Assessment: Where operatives may be exposed to hazardous products a specific CoSHH assessment has been carried out

Date of compilation:

Distribution			
Principal Contractor			
Company:		Contracts Manager:	
Site team:			
Company:	Name:	Signed:	Dated:
All operatives must sign this method statement to confirm that they completely understand the method statement and attached risk assessment and they agree to comply with the method of works and risk controls			
Notes:			
Attachments:			