

17 CRAVEN ROAD, READING

HERITAGE REPORT

OCTOBER 2020

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Worlledge Associates

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WORLLEDGE ASSOCIATES

Worlledge Associates is an Oxford-based heritage consultancy, committed to the effective management of the historic environment. Established in 2014 by Nicholas and Alison Worlledge, Nicholas came to private practice with over 35 years' experience working in heritage management for local authorities. This intimate knowledge and understanding of council processes, and planning policy and practice, helps us to work collaboratively with owners and decision-makers to manage change to the historic environment.

Our team of dedicated researchers and specialists believe in the capacity of the historic environment to contribute to society's collective economic, social, and cultural well-being. We aim to identify what is significant about places and spaces in order to support their effective management and sustain their heritage value. We have worked with a wide range of property-owners and developers including universities and colleges, museums and libraries, large country estates, manor house, farmsteads, cottages, town houses and new housing sites.

INTRODUCTION

The intelligent management of change is a key principle necessary to sustain the historic environment for present and future generations to enjoy. Historic England and successive government agencies have published policy and advice that extend our understanding of the historic environment and develop our competency in making decisions about how to manage it.

Paragraphs 4-10 of Historic England's Good Practice Advice Note 2 (Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment) explains that applications (for planning permission and listed building consent) have a greater likelihood of success and better decisions will be made when applicants and local planning authorities assess and understand the particular nature of the significance of an asset, the extent of the asset's fabric to which the significance relates and the level of importance of that significance.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) provides a very similar message in paragraphs 189 and 190 expecting both applicant and local planning authority to take responsibility for understanding the significance of a heritage asset and the impact of a development proposal, seeking to avoid unacceptable conflict between the asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

It has never been the intention of government to prevent change or freeze frame local communities and current policy and good practice suggests that change, if managed intelligently would not be harmful.

17 Craven Road is included in the National Heritage List for England. The list description writes that the house from c 1838 and was relocated to Craven Road c 1879-80. It was the private house of one of Readings leading residents, John Okey Taylor (1825-1918). Following his death it was purchased by the adjacent Reading School as a headmaster's residence and formed part of the school until it was sold in 1997 Royal Berkshire Hospitals Trust. While it has remained vacant for some time and is in a deteriorating condition, it is proposed to restore the building as part of the provision of a wellbeing centre for NHS staff.

This Report has been prepared to assess the heritage significance of 17 Craven Road, and the conservation challenges and options for its adaptive re-use. The report provides a brief history of the development of the Redlands Estate and 17 Craven Road as part of this development. Following a brief description of the house, an assessment is provided of its heritage significance.

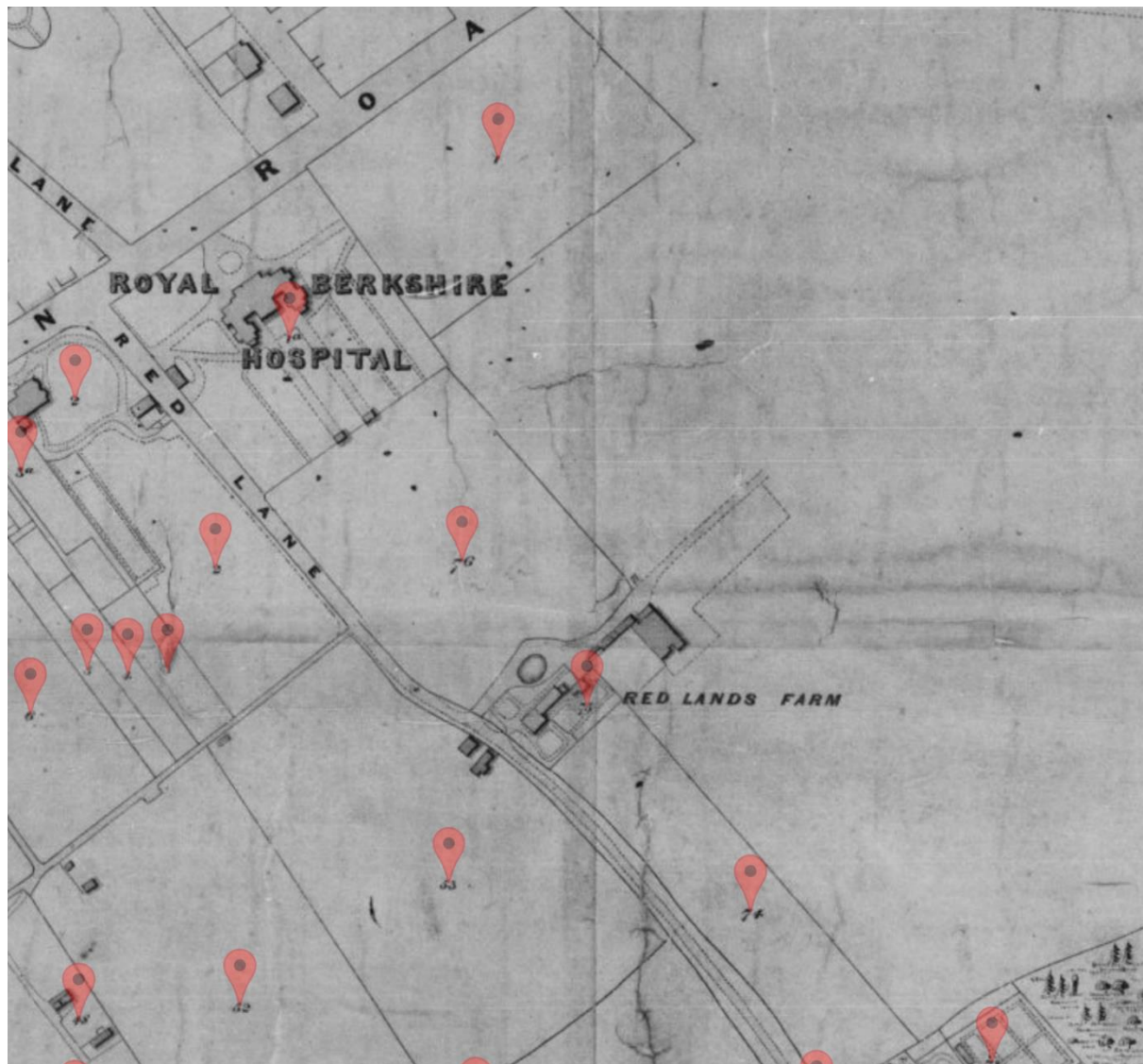
The report will then briefly address the issue of the current physical condition of the building and challenges and the options to achieving its long-term preservation, and provide comments on pre-application heritage and design advice provided by Reading Borough Council in relation to repairs to the site, and its future development.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE REDLANDS ESTATE READING

The land which was developed as the Redlands Estate became property of the Crown in 1536 following the dissolution of Reading Abbey and was subsequently granted to William Gray, local MP and advisor to Henry VIII, in 1545.

Following William's death, the property fell to his stepson John Blagrove and stayed within the family until sold by the executors of George Blagrove to the Right Hon. Henry Addington (Viscount Sidmouth) in 1789.

The area remained rural throughout enclosure and the principal farm during the eighteenth century; Red Lane Farm was farmed by Shackel family. In 1839 the Royal Berkshire Hospital was opened on land north of Red Lane Farm, donated by Viscount Sidmouth.



Tithe Map of 1839 showing the Hospital Grounds north of Red Lands Farm which was divided up for development in the 1860s

The arrival of the Great Western railway in 1838 along with associated large businesses such as Sutton Seeds and their required workforce created rapid expansion of Reading, with an increased need for housing. Lord Sidmouth began selling plots of land for house building and in 1865 the final tenancy of Red Lane Farm ended for tenant George Shackel



1840 Map of Reading with the newly completed Great Western Railway to the north and the completely undeveloped Redlands estate east of Red Lane Farm (red dot)

Plots were sold speculatively; the first plots being listed in 1872. Continual development throughout the late nineteenth century resulting in a varied typology of buildings from terrace houses to villas, expanding south from London Road.

In 1871 Reading School moved from its early site at the Abbey hospital to new grounds within Redlands Estate, south of Erleigh Road.



1873 6 Inch OS Map showing the relatively undeveloped area south east of Reading Hospital (red dot) and the new site of Reading School (blue dot) to the south of Erleigh Road

17 CRAVEN ROAD, READING

This house lies on the eastern side of Craven Road opposite the Royal Berkshire Hospital main entrance. Craven Road had been established prior to 1873 but the eastern side was only built on at each end initially. The remaining villas on the east of Craven Road were built after 1875 the west of the road was and continues to be occupied by the hospital and supporting buildings.



Extract from 1879 25-inch OS map (surveyed 1875) showing Craven Road to the east of The Royal Berkshire Hospital

The national heritage listing description for the building states that it was moved to Craven Road in 1878 from the junction of King's and Queen's Road where it was previously named Penrhyn Lodge. Further research is required to find documentary evidence to confirm this, but there is evidence from the design of the house and its footprint which supports this contention.

In 1836 the Reading Mercury carried an advertisement that a slate merchant Thomas Warmsley moved premises to King's Road, establishing Bangor Slate Wharf near Kennet Bridge. In 1841 the Berkshire Chronicle advertised that Elizabeth Warmsley would continue her late husband's business from the same premises. A month later it lists No 2 Bangor Place for let as a 'four-bedroom property suitable for a 'genteel family' with applications to be made to Mrs. Warmsley on the premises'

The 1861 census lists Elizabeth living at 41 Kings Road with her son John Okey Taylor. He married Mary Edkins in 1859 and is reported as having two children born in 1861 and 1864 at Bangor place (5th October 1861, 14th May 1864) In 1869 Elizabeth is reported as having died at her residence of Bangor Place aged 79.



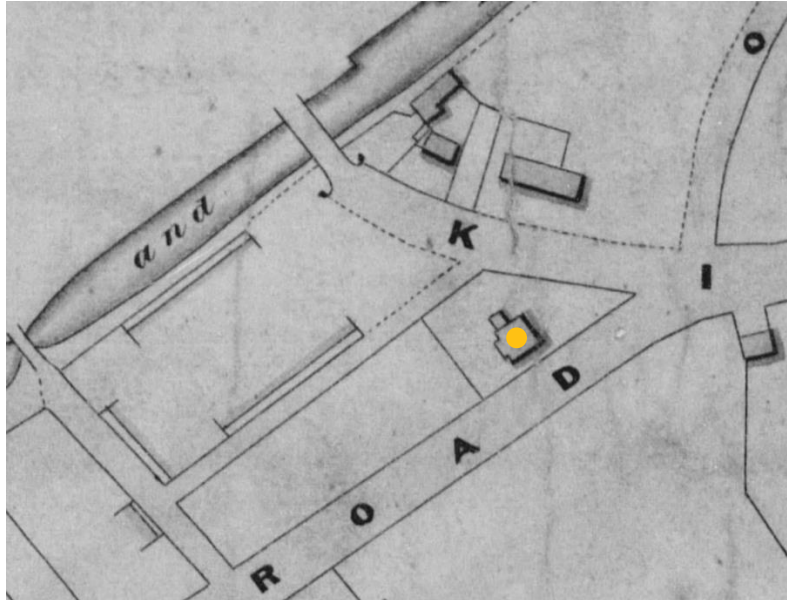
Extract from 1895 Fire Insurance Map for Reading (British Library Collection) showing Bangor Wharf and Bangor Place, two houses fronting Kings Road

John and Mary are listed along with their children at Penrhyn Lodge in the census of 1871. It is unclear when they moved to this property, but newspaper reports in 1868 for J O Taylor, refer to his address as Penrhyn Lodge.



1879 25 Inch OS map showing Penrhyn Lodge (circled in red) at the junction of King's and Queen's Road

While the list description (see Appendix 1) refers to Penrhyn Lodge as having been built in 1840, the 1838 Tithe Award Map for Reading St Giles, shows the house in place by that date. It is on a more generous plan than shown on the 1879 OS map.



Extract from the 1838 Tithe Award Map 1838 showing the house on the junction of Queens and Kings Road (yellow)

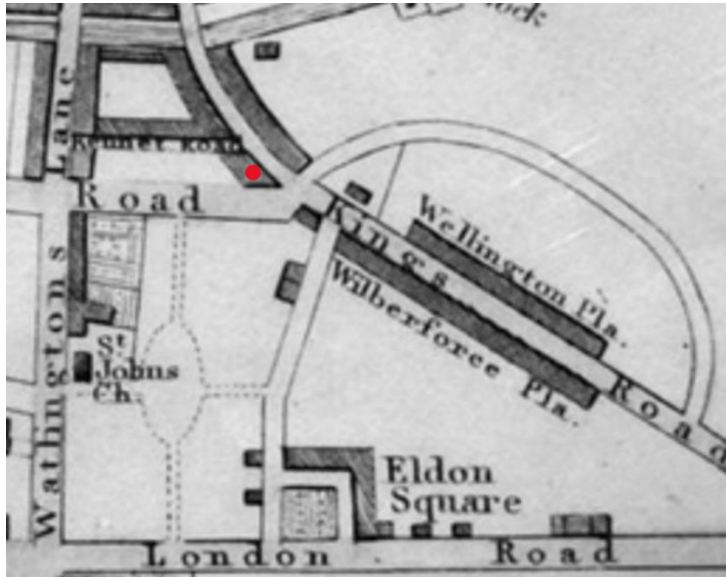
The Tithe Award Map and the 1840 map of Reading shows Queens Road as undeveloped. It had only been laid out in 1832-3 to join with Kings Road. Newspaper reports show that Crown Land in this part of Reading was being sold in the mid-1830s, with the parcel of land bounded by Kings Road, Queens Road and the Towpath being put up for sale in April 1835. (Reading Chronicle 20 April 1835).

The 1841 Census lists very few people in Queens Road. It is clearly a house of some status. The first person listed in the street one would consider to be of sufficient status and means is Samuel Biggs (45) a local builder, who may well have purchased one of the lots and built himself a house.

The list description credits Henry Briant, a young Reading architect with the design. Research has not revealed documentary evidence for this attribution, but he was clearly an architect of some standing. In 1836 he won the competition for the design of the Royal Berkshire Hospital, submitted two designs, one in the Gothic and the other in the Ionic Order. The Ionic was chosen. (London Evening Standard 28 December 1836)

Clearly, he was well versed in Gothic architecture, however. It is noted that Biggs submitted a tender to build the Hospital in early 1837 and would have been aware of the Gothic design as it was

placed on public display in February 1837. Henry Briant and his brother Nathaniel, also an architect, became partners in 1837 and developed speculative houses in Kings Road and Eldon Square after buying land from the Crown during this period.



Extract from 1840 map of Reading showing the development of the site (red dot) and houses in Kings Road and Eldon Square, the development of which is attributed to Henry and Nathaniel Briant

In the 1851 census Samuel Biggs (58) is living elsewhere in Reading. In the absence of specific street addresses it is not possible to identify who was living at the house. In the 1861 census, however, a property in Queens Road is described 'Gothic Villa' which was being lived in by a John Banks, who describes himself as a Landed Proprietor. A newspaper search under 'Gothic Villa' confirmed the name was associated with the Cowslade family, with reference to them living at 'Gothic Villa, Queens Road' from 1850 through to at least 1858. It is thought highly likely that this was the house, which was re-named 'Penrhyn Lodge' after the slate quarry in Bangor, which supplied the Warmasley Slate business, established in 1811 following the opening of the Kennet and Avon Canal in 1810, which provided direct communications with Bristol opening up the supply market from Wales.

John Okey Taylor was a prominent gentleman and whilst his stepfathers slate business was continued by his son, Charles Warmasley Taylor, he involved himself heavily and successfully within public institutions. He was Chairman of the Board of Guardians, elected Mayor of Reading in 1863 and was Chairman of the Reading Gas company, being involved in its operation right up until his death.

In 1881 the Berkshire Chronicle prints a letter wishing to thank Mr. Taylor for his part in the protection the Board of Guardians provided and states his address as Cravenhurst, an address which

is confirmed by the 1891 census and his obituary yet is referred to as number 17 Craven Road in the 1901 census.

The land which Cravenhurst was built on was sold in 1880 as 'a plot of freehold building land, with a frontage of 100 feet; adjoining the grammar school.



Extract from the 1879 25-inch OS map showing the empty plots to the east of Craven Rd and the site of number 17 in blue

During the period which Cravenhurst is built the corner of King's and Queen's Road is redeveloped. **The footprint occupied by Cravenhurst is similar to that of Penrhyn Lodge without its outbuildings and it is reasonable to believe that an eminent gentleman would be in a position to have the building moved to a new and more desirable location away from the increasingly industrial area of King's Road.**

The list description gives a date of 1878, but Penrhyn Lodge is shown on the 1879 25-inch OS map, while the site in Craven Road was not purchased until 1880.



Extracts from the 1879 25-inch OS and 1900 25-inch OS showing the similar footprints of Penrhyn Lodge without its support buildings and Cravenhurst at 17 Craven Road (site outlined blue)

The listing cites the move as being completed by architect Joshua Greenaway. J Greenaway is the architect of plans for a temperance bar, The Livesey Coffee House, which was built in King's Road in 1880 on the site of Penrhyn Lodge. Further research may again yield more definite evidence that the move from Kings Road to Craven Road took place.

Following the expansion of Reading School which required that a housemaster now inhabit what had been the Headmasters quarters, the Governors of the school were required to find him alternative accommodation. The Headmaster, George Keeton initially suggested the property Navarre on the south-western corner of Craven Road but this was not well received by the schools trustees and the option lapsed. When Cravenhurst came up for sale in the summer of 1918 it was deemed suitable as the new Headmasters residence and the Council was advised to purchase the property for £3500 and allow a further £580 for alterations to suit its new purpose. Initially due to be named North Lodge Keeton instead christened it Head Master's Lodge as it remained.

The building was sold to Royal Berkshire Hospitals trust in 1997 where it was used as office space.



Aerial photo 1921 showing 17 Craven Road (red dot) to the west of Reading School

DESCRIPTION OF 17 CRAVEN RD



Aerial image of 17 Craven Road in a large garden

17 Craven Road, a house designed in the neo-Gothic style of the first half of the nineteenth century, lies on the eastern side of Craven road. Two-storey, with a small basement, it is constructed of stone under a Welsh slate roof, behind a parapet, laid in a decorative pattern. There is a brick wing to the north east corner with a hipped slate roof. There are multiple double and triple decorative projecting chimney-stacks.



Front

The front (west) elevation is relatively symmetrical with two matching gables to either end bisected by a small gable. There is a centrally placed projecting enclosed porch which incorporates Gothic detailing. To the south (RHS) there is a projecting three-sided canted bay with a parapet roof and pairs of stone transomed and mullion windows with casements. To the north (LHS) there is a three light stone transomed windows with casements. To the first floor there are three two-light stone transomed and mullion windows centrally placed beneath the gables. These windows have drip-moulds with the window above the bay having carved head stops. There is a 'bird-beak' dentil course detail above the first-floor windows to all elevations. The gables have 'arrow-slit' details, with a cruciform to the southern gable and simple slit to the north. The small middle gable has a plain-stone shield.

To the northern side there is a single-storey wing with a parapet roof set back from the line of the main elevation, with a double stone transomed and mullion window with casements, and drip-mould over. Set further back is a two-storey projecting gable with a single casement window with a drip-mould.



South

The south (side) elevation is asymmetrical with matching double gables and arrow slit detail. To the east there is a canted 3 bay window with parapet roof, the central bay having double doors and single transom and mullion windows to the sides. Above the bay is a pair of transom and mullion windows with drip moulding.

To the west the ground floor features a triple transom and mullion window with drip moulding, above which is a decorative 3-sided oriel window with parapet roof and transom and 3 sets of single transom and mullion windows. Set to the west of the centre of the building is a single transom and mullion windows.



East

The rear (east) elevation has a projected central gable with arrow slit detail, there is a projecting brick wing to the north of the stone building. To the south a projecting straight sided bay with hipped roof and 4 light transom and mullion windows sits beneath double transom and mullion windows with drip moulding. The gable has a triple transom and mullion window above which is a double window all with drip moulding.

To the north a triple transom and mullion window at ground level sits below a double transom and mullion. The detailing of the right-hand side stone wing is different to the rest of the building; much simpler transom and mullion windows, the drip moulding and dentil course are absent.

The northern brick wing has a hipped roof featuring different chimney detail to the rest of the building. On the first floor is a single door with gothic arch detailing and triple sash window above set in stone dressings.

The change in detail of the right-hand side stone wing and the brick wing strongly suggest these are contemporary of possibly later additions to the c 1838 original house.



North

The north elevation comprises of a projecting stone gable with stone and arrow slit detailing that matches the east and south elevations. There is a single door opening with gothic arc detail alongside a 2 over 2 timber sash window. Above are two single transom and mullion windows with drip moulding detail.

The brick wing to the west has a single door opening with combined casement and 3 over 3 sash window set in stone dressings to its east. The second floor features an off centre 3 over 3 sash and a single sash window over the stairs



View of the south and east elevations (049)



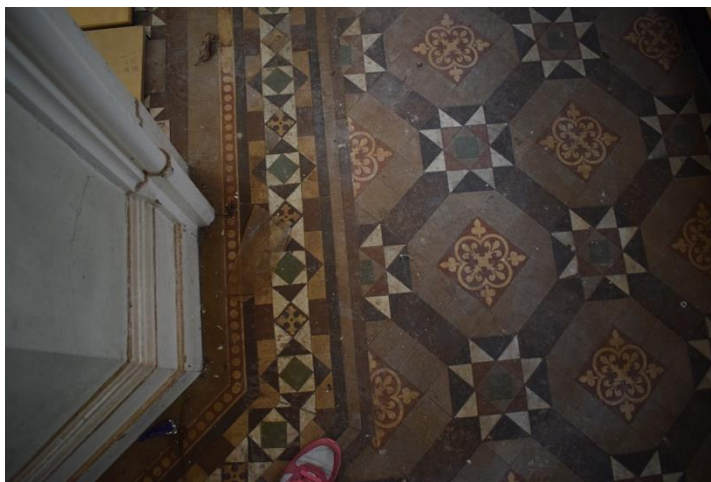
View of the east elevation showing the change in detail to the RHS of the gable and the brick wing (052)

INTERIOR

The interior is in a deteriorating condition. It retains a number of architecturally significant elements, such as the staircase, and some 'Gothic' details which appear to have been relocated with the house c 1879-80. There is one ornate plaster ceiling in a Gothic style in one room with a decorative cornice in the later 19th century style. There are surviving joinery details, and some Minton floor tiles.



Staircase more classical c 1838 in its sweeping style, although balustrades are Gothic (0027)



Minton tiles (029)



Decorate plaster ceiling and cornice (0030)



Gothic fire surround (0040)



Skylight with applied colour glazing (01565)

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

17 Craven Road is included in the National Heritage List for England. The entry reads:

Headmaster's lodge for Reading School. Built 1840 as Penrhyn Lodge at the junction of King's Road and Queen's Road by Henry Briant. Moved to Craven Road probably 1878, architect Joshua Greenaway. Asymmetrical detached villa. 2 storeys coursed dressed stone. 3 bays, mullion and transom windows with hoodmoulds. Slate roof with lozenge bands. Corbels to parapet continued up 3 gables to west - the left-hand gable breaks forward; the centre gable is small for a badge and a projecting gabled porch with chamfered shafted corners; the right-hand gable has parapeted angled bay. Lower 2 storey extension with gabled return to left. South front has oriel on grotesque corbel and has head stops to 1st floor right hand window. Steps to east entrance with carved eagle on top of flight.

Significance is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Annex as comprising:

The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

Placing the area in its historical context and describing its characteristics and appearance is an important component of the evidence gathering exercise to inform understanding of a place's significance and contribution of its setting. As Historic England explains in 'Conservation Principles' (2008) understanding how a place has evolved and how different phases add to or detract from its significance is a part of that exercise.

SUBURBAN HOUSING

Historic England's Listing Selection Guide, Suburban and Country Houses (2011) provides useful background information on the development of the suburb, giving a focus on where the heritage significance of such building types and historic areas lie:

As the country house ideal cascaded down the aspiring social scale, the Victorian villa began to set the pattern for the suburban house – detached or semi-detached – of the Edwardian and inter-war period. New architectural styles in their pure form continued to be used by the architect to try and keep one step ahead of the general builder and the pattern-book but the prevailing orthodoxy from the mid nineteenth century onwards became an eclectic historicism where house style ranged from the sophisticated reinterpretations of previous established styles to a desperate search for the novel and the bizarre in the name of fashion. (page 6)

From the 1840s onwards, good quality substantial detached villas designed by established local architects proliferated on villa estates located on the edge of flourishing cities; stylistic eclecticism was established (page 9)

Architecture, particularly in decorative terms, was also influenced by the Aesthetic Movement of the 1870s and 1880s, an artistic reaction against what was seen as the misdirected opulence and extravagance of the High Victorian period, particularly in revolutionising middle-class taste. The 'Domestic Revival' moved away from historicist and ecclesiastical styles towards accessible cosiness and homeliness, with leaded windows, small tile-hung or timbered gables placed at different heights and depths, and tall chimneystacks based on examples of vernacular buildings such as farmhouses being studied at first hand from the 1860s (page 10).

Suburban houses not only show great architectural ingenuity and invention in style, materials, and plan form, they were often carefully designed in relation to their garden, street layout and neighbouring plots. Setting may be an important factor in assessing their special interest. (Page 14)

THE 'GOTHIC REVIVAL' STYLE

17 Craven Road was designed in the 'Gothic Revival' style, of which evidence suggests Henry Brient, the alleged architect, was an exponent, having chosen this in 1836 for one of two winning designs for the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

The Victoria and Albert Museum's guide on the "Gothic Revival" style includes the following; <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/s/style-guide-gothic-revival/>

Gothic Revival was one of the most influential styles of the 19th century. Designs were based on forms and patterns used in the Middle Ages. Serious study was combined with a

more fanciful, romantic vision of Medieval chivalry and romance. A wide range of religious, civic and domestic buildings were built and furnished in the Gothic Revival style, which flourished from 1830 to 1900.

Gothic buildings of the 12th to 16th centuries were a major source of inspiration to 19th-century designers. The writings of A.W.N. Pugin, (1812-1852) particularly *Contrasts* (1836) and *True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* (1842), had a major influence on the style and theory of the Gothic Revival. Pugin urged architects and designers to work from the fundamental principles of Medieval art. These included truth to structure, material and purpose.

John Ruskin (1819-1900) was the most influential art critic of his day. His interest in Medieval architecture was aroused by travels in Europe, during which he made detailed watercolour studies... Two of his most important books, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (three volumes, 1851-1853), had an enormous impact on the Gothic Revival. Ruskin advocated a return to the spiritual values of the Middle Ages, which he felt had been lost in the mechanised and materialistic age in which he lived.

This 'Gothic Revival' style rejected the rigidity and formality of classical architecture, and sought a return to medieval and vernacular forms, and the use of traditional materials and craft. The buildings were asymmetrical, with steep sloping gabled and hipped roof form, with plain tiles or stone slates. Large multiple chimneystacks were another major feature of domestic 'Gothic Revival' style. The windows frequently have pointed arches with thick mullions and transoms. Bay windows and projecting porches also featured.

JOHN OKEY TAYLOR (1825-1918)

His Obituary in the Reading Mercury 20 April 1918, provides the following information:

He was born in Reading on 7 June 1825. His father died in infancy, but his stepfather, the founder of Warmsley and Son, gave him his first business training. He was educated at Mr Charles Havell's school and privately.

He became a member of the board of guardians in 1850 and remained associated with it for twenty-six years, the existing Poor Law Institution being built during the period of his chairmanship, which covered the period 1867-75. In 1855 he secured election to the Reading Town Council as one of the representatives of Abbey Ward.

In 1863 he was elected mayor of the borough. The outstanding feature of Mr Okey Taylor's life work and the one with which his name will be perpetually associated is that of the providing of Reading with gas. He became a director of the Reading Union Gas Co., in 1855, and few years later became chairman. Then came the amalgamation with the Reading

Union Gas Co., and at its first meeting of the shareholders of the Reading gas Co., held on February 1863, Mr Okey Taylor was elected chairman. His involvement with the gas industry in Reading extending over a period of sixty-three years.

He was appointed to the Commission of the Peace for Reading. He was a Trustee of the Reading Savings Bank, with which he was associated for over sixty-years. He also served on the board of management of the Royal Berks Hospital. For thirteen years he was a churchwarden of St Giles Church, and active member of the old Mechanics Institute.

READING SCHOOL

Reading School owned 17 Craven Road from 1919 to 1997. An article in the school magazine in 2010, later adapted, provided the following brief history.

1125 - 1539: Reading Abbey was founded in 1121 by Cluniac monks under the patronage of King Henry I. The secular functions of the Abbey, including the School, commenced in 1125. Henry VII established grammar school status in 1486, re-founding the School in the Abbey's Hospitium of St John. In 1539 the Town was thrown into turmoil with the dissolution of the Abbey.

1540 - 1866: Civic responsibilities passed from the Abbey to the Town Corporation. The School's governance was regulated by King Henry VIII's grant of Letters Patent, in 1541, to Headmaster Leonard Coxe. The subsequent Charter that Queen Elizabeth I gave to the Town of Reading in 1560, included clauses that effectively governed the School, in the Forbury, Reading, for a further three hundred years. In the middle of this era came the expansion of the School's buildings - and horizons - under Haviland John Hiley, Headmaster from 1716 to 1750. The School rose to the pinnacle of its fame under Dr Richard Valpy, who was Headmaster from 1781-1830, but there followed a steep decline in its fortunes after his long reign ended and the Victorian gentry began to establish the modern network of Public Schools.

III 1867 to date: With the passing of the Reading School Act of 1867 the School was enabled to move to its present site in Erleigh Road, Reading, where the foundation stone was laid by Edward, Prince of Wales, in 1870 and Alfred Waterhouse's splendid buildings opened in 1871. Following some reconstitution in 1882, the transition to a Maintained School came under Dr William Charles Epstein (Headmaster 1894-1914), the absorption of Kendrick Boys School in 1916 occurred under George Haydn Keeton (Headmaster 1914-1939), and the Education Act of 1944 (which introduced the 11+) was passed while Charles Edward Kemp was Headmaster (1939-1966).

Newspaper evidence shows that the Headmaster's Lodge and grounds was used by the school until the house was sold in 1997.

HENRY BRIANT (1812-84) AND NATHANIEL BRIANT (1816-49)

There is no definitive list of works by these two brothers. Henry was listed in 1835 as a surveyor and architect, and Nathaniel as an architect. They went into partnership in 1837 (Berkshire Chronicle 16 Oct 1839) which was dissolved in March 1842. (John Bull 12 March 1842) It is understood that Henry Briant subsequently took up Holy Orders in 1843.

Works which have been identified or attributed to them include:

- St Giles National School, H Briant (Reading Mercury 16 Nov 1835)
- Royal Berkshire Hospital, H Briant (London Evening Standard 28 December 1836) with assistance from N Briant
- Development of 8 Lots Oxford Road, Henry Briant (21 Oct 1837)
- Barclays Bank King Street, N Briant 1838-39*
- No. 25 Market Place, Reading*
- Castle Street Chapel, 1840 H & N Briant 1840
- Cemetery Gates and Lodges
- Simmonds Malthouse
- Church of St Mary
- Church of St Peter and St Paul
- Eldon Square - Laid out and houses built in 1835-9 – Speculation by Nathaniel and Henry Briant, who bought the land from the Commissioners of Woods and Forests in 1833 and 1835* (Nine entries in the National Heritage List for England for houses in the square)
- King's Road, Houses, 1832-5, attributed to Henry and Nathaniel Briant*.
- Caversham 40 acres of development – N Briant (Berkshire Chronicle 13 March 1841)

Note: Kings Road and Eldon Square in the same vicinity as Penrhyn Lodge

*Victorian Architecture in Reading: walking tours for The Arts Society Wokingham

<https://www.theartsocietywokingham.org.uk/DocumentStore/Hidden%20Reading%20notes.pdf>

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Having regard to the history and the surviving fabric it is considered the heritage significance of 17 Craven Road can be summarized as follows:

EVIDENTIAL

The quality of the design materials and detailing, and its construction (c 1838) on a generous and prominent location on the corner of Kings Road and Queens Road, and known locally as the 'Gothic Villa', it provides evidence of the wealth and social status of the original (currently unknown) owner and builder of the house, and the quality of housing being constructed during this period along Kings Road.

Its alleged dismantling and rebuilding (c1879-80) on the largest plot in Craven Road on the Redlands Estate, provides evidence of the wealth and social status of its owner John Oakey Taylor (1825-1918), and the quality of houses being developed in this newly expanding part of Reading from the mid-1860s. The move, if it can be confirmed, is highly unusual - more research is needed to establish the motivations for this move.

The addition of a stone and the brick wing to the c 1838 house following its rebuilding at Craven Road demonstrates the increased level of service accommodation expected in houses of the late 19th century, and the wealth of John Oakey Taylor in funding the move and the provision of this accommodation.

Its use from 1919 to at least 1976 as the Headmasters House for Reading School, and continued use by the school until its sale in 1997 it provides evidence of the high-regard and social status accorded to the Headmaster of Reading School

HISTORICAL

17 Craven Road is historically significant for its relationship with J O Taylor, a prominent Reading figure, who acquired the property c 1868 and renamed it Penrhyn Lodge in recognition of his family connection with Warmley and Taylor slate merchants, established 1810, and the Penrhyn slate quarry, Bangor which was the major supplier to the company. Allegedly moved (c1879-80) and renamed Cravenhurst, it remained his family residence until his death in 1918.

The building's connection to the local architect Henry Briant (1812-70) who is attributed with the design is significant. In 1836 he won the competition to design the Royal Berkshire Hospital, submitting two designs, one Classical the second Gothic. In partnership with brother Nathaniel Briant (1816-49) they undertook speculative house development in Kings Road and Eldon Square from the mid-1830s until the early 1840s, when Henry left architecture for the church (c1843).

Historically significant for its connection and relationship to Reading school between 1919-1997. Purchased as the Headmaster's lodge when absorption of Kendrick Boys School increased the number of students to an extent where then Headmaster George Keeton required a separate dwelling. Continuing to be used for its intended purpose by successive Headmasters until at least 1978 and then as a venue for the Headmasters speeches to pupils within the garden, until 1996.

17 Craven Road is significant as an unusual example of a house constructed in stone c 1838 and being subsequently dismantled and relocated c1879-80, in preference to the construction of a new house.

AESTHETICS

Aesthetically significant as a house designed in the neo-Gothic style (c1838), which through its composition, materials and use of Gothic detailing - elaborate porch, oriel window, carved heads to drip-moulds, 'bird-beak' dentil course, decorative chimney stacks, decorative slate roof, represents a high-quality example of its type. The interior retains a number of architectural elements which contribute to its aesthetic significance.

The house, together with its generous garden is aesthetically significant for the visual contribution it makes to the eastern side Craven Road, which was developed from the mid 1860s onwards with high-quality architect designed houses, in a variety of styles, demonstrating the social and economic status of their owners.