

Heritage Statement

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Proposed Change Of Use and amalgamation of 29 Queen Victoria Street (Class A5) and 31 (Class A2) Queen Victoria Street, Reading to a Restaurant (Class A3)

Prepared on
behalf of Axa
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1. Introduction

This Heritage Statement is provided in support of an application for the Proposed Change of Use and amalgamation of 29 (Class A5 - trading as Kokoro) and 31 (Class A2 - vacant Betting shop) Queen Victoria Street, Reading to a Restaurant (Class A3). Kokoro will extend into the amalgamated unit.

This report looks to highlight the historic significance of the building and how the proposed works will further enhance the use of the units as a whole. Specific proposals have been developed and therefore reference to these are made where appropriate.

The purpose of this statement is to outline the key planning policies and considerations at National and Local level in relation to the current proposals. Short dialogue is provided where appropriate to demonstrate consideration and compliance with these policies. The commentary within this document should be read in conjunction with the Planning and Design and Access Statements which accompany the application.

Planning guidance and policy is provided at National level (NPPF) and Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

2. Legislative Context

Primary Legislation covering works to Listed Buildings is contained within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Local Authorities are required to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the Listed Building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses and that special regard must be given in the exercise of Planning functions to the desirability of preserving or enhancing Listed Buildings and their settings.

“no person shall execute or cause to be executed any works for the demolition of a Listed Building or for its alteration or extension in any manner which would affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest, unless the works are authorised.”

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published first published in 2012, and has recently been updated, with the revised guidance published in February 2019. This document was published by the government and sets out the national standards which require to be considered by individual Authorities when producing Local Planning guidance. It contains an overarching set of principles which must be applied to all planning situations. The NPPF contains the outline within which Local Policy must sit, the guidance within NPPF therefore is primary.

Relevant Sections of NPPF

Section 12 ‘Achieving Well Designed Places’ states that the creation of high quality buildings and spaces is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is seen as a cornerstone to building good quality environments for the long term. It notes that design should be sympathetic to local character and history.

Section 16 ‘Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment’ states that Local Plans should set out positive strategies for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. There must be a recognition through local policy that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Local Authorities are advised to take account of the following when developing local planning strategy:

- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and preserving them in a viable use consistent with their conservation;
- The wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that the conservation of the historic environment can bring;
- The desirability of new development in making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness;
- Opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

Paragraph 189 further states:

“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require the 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 the significance.”

Other National Guidance

Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (English heritage 2008)

This document outlines Historic England’s approach to the sustainable management of the historic environment and provides guidance to allow consistency of approach. It is designed to allow Local Authorities to provide informed advice. It places importance on understanding significance as a means to correctly assess the effects of change to historically significant assets.

Local Policy

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

EN1: Protection And Enhancement Of The Historic Environment

Historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced.

All 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.

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 settings.

Applications which affect, or have the potential to affect, the significant features of heritage assets should be justified by a Heritage Statement.

3. The Site Description



29 and 31 Queen Victoria Street are two separate retail units located in the Primary Shopping Area of Reading town centre. 29 is the former William Hill Bookmakers unit and 31 is Kokoro, a sushi restaurant.

The street is part of the pedestrianised town Centre Primary shopping area. The application site is part of a Grade II Listed building. The upper levels of the Queen Victoria Street elevation remain largely unaltered however the ground floor retail units have been significantly altered with shop fronts replaced to reflect an ever changing retail market. Currently both shops have contemporary shop fronts that will be retained with only minor modifications.

4. Historical Context and Listing Information

1-32 Queen Victoria Street are classified as Grade II Listed buildings. These buildings were Listed in December 1978 with the following accompanying description:

“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. 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)”.

The listing focuses on the exterior of the buildings with no specific reference to the interior. 29 and 31 have been altered over time with varied levels of fit out as occupiers have changed. There are no visible interior features of heritage significance in either 29 or 31 Queen Victoria Street.



5. Design Proposals and Effect on Existing Building

The Kokoro unit was implemented under 161971/FUL and 161972/LBC. The shopfronts to both 31 and 29 QVS are retained with a new fascia board to the William Hill unit. Advertisement Consent is sought for a revised signage proposal.

Some internal changes to the building are proposed, this primarily includes the opening up of four door size openings between the units and the insertion of stud partition walls. The extent of the changes is such that the original form of the building would be retained and there is not considered to be any significant harm to the historic character of the listed building.

The top pelmet above the fascia signage is also to be re-painted in eggshell to match the proposed fascia signage background whilst the shop front framing is to be painted a darker colour: Dulux 00NN 37/000 - Grey, eggshell finish. The buildings existing pilasters are retained with matching sized fascia boards for the units. The proportions of the shopfronts remains the same and are in keeping with the overall streetscape of Queen Victoria Street.

No alterations to the rear of the building are proposed as part of this application.

The proposed development is not considered to result in any significant harm to the historic character of the listed building or character of the surrounding area



6. Statement of Significance and Building Impact Assessment

The remaining historical features are found in the external appearance of the original buildings. The proposed works have been carefully considered so as to not have a negative impact on any original features of the buildings. The proposals will therefore not have an adverse effect on the heritage status of the building as a whole. Thus the proposals will ensure that the overall Listing (1-32 Queen Victoria Street) can continue to accrue value (in terms of significance).

7. Summary and Conclusions

The proposals for internal fit out and minor external shop front alterations have been carefully considered within the context of this heritage asset, and intend to work with the historical fabric of the building.

In summary the proposal as demonstrated:

- will bring a vacant unit into use and enhance the character of the host Listed building.
- all proposed works are lightweight and can be removed without detriment to the historic fabric of the host building.

It is recognised that the best way of securing the future and upkeep of historic buildings is to keep them in use. It is further recognised that some level of adaption or change may be required in order to meet the needs of current building users, provided this will not have undue effect on the heritage status of the building.

The proposed works will have no negative effect on the external fabric of the building and there will be no adverse impact on the Listed Building. The proposal aligns with policy at a National and Local level.