

Heritage Statement

Nos.6-8 Market Place, Reading

June 2020

Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Heritage Assets	4
3.	Historical Development of the Site within Central Reading	7
4.	Heritage Significance	15
5.	Review of Application Proposals and Heritage Impacts	69
6.	Summary and Conclusions	82
Appendix 1: Conservation Area Boundary Map		84
Appendix 2: List Entries		87
Appendix 3: Heritage Legislation, Policy and Guidance		89

Client

Castleforge Partners

Our reference

FAIS3001

June 2020

1. Introduction

Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 This Heritage Statement report has been prepared by Turley Heritage on behalf of our 'Client' and the 'Applicant' (Castleforge Partners) to provide relevant and proportionate information to the local planning authority (Reading Borough Council) with regard to the potential built heritage impacts associated with the proposed development at 6-8 Market ('the Site') within Reading town centre. This accompanies an application for full Planning Permission for this development, which is described as:

"Internal and external refurbishment works to existing retained office building, including alterations to building frontage on Market Place and Abbey Square. Erection of side wing and 2 storey extension to increase B1(a) office provision (totalling 10,921 sqm GEA) with associated works, including infilling at ground floor, and servicing arrangements from Abbey Square. Retention of existing ground floor retail units on Market Place".

- 1.2 This scheme has been subject to a process of pre-application engagement with the local planning authority, also including presentation of earlier iterations of the proposals to the local Design Review Panel (DRP). Feedback and discussion from this process has been used to further inform the final submission, and the scheme design has also been refined and further detailed accordingly before application.
- 1.3 As part of our assessment to inform this report we have identified that the Site building is not itself statutorily designated or otherwise locally listed, but is located within the boundary of the designated area of the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area. The Site is also within close proximity of a number of listed buildings within this conservation area. The proposed development has the potential to affect the significance of each of these heritage assets, either directly or indirectly through change to setting and views. These are the built heritage impacts to be assessed within this report.
- 1.4 The requirement for this report stems from Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which requires that special regard be given to the desirability of preserving the special interest of listed buildings or their settings. Section 72 of the act also places a duty upon the local planning authority in determining applications for development affecting conservation areas to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.
- 1.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 provides the Government's national planning policy for the conservation of the historic environment. In respect of information requirements, it sets out that

'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

- 1.6 Paragraph 190 then sets out that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of heritage assets that might 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.

Structure of this Report

- 1.7 In accordance with the legislative and policy requirements outlined above, **Section 2** of this report firstly identifies the relevant heritage assets within the Site and its vicinity, the significance of which would likely be affected by direct or indirect impacts from the scheme proposals at application. These have been confirmed for assessment through desktop analysis; as informed by past professional knowledge and experience of the history and character of Reading town centre. For ease of reference, the Boundary Map for the conservation area is included in **Appendix 1**, as well as the full List Entries for the nearby listed buildings at **Appendix 2**.
- 1.8 **Section 3** of this report provides a brief description of the historical development of the Site and its surroundings, in order to establish context, and so to inform an understanding of the Site's contribution to the significance of nearby heritage assets in later sections.
- 1.9 **Section 4** provides an assessment of the heritage significance of the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area, in terms of its character and appearance, with specific reference made to the Site and any contribution it makes to the significance of the conservation area as a whole. This section then provides summary statements of heritage significance for the nearby listed buildings. These statements assess the special architectural and historic interest of this other designated heritage assets, and also the relative contribution of their setting (including the conservation area and the Site itself) to overall significance.
- 1.10 At this stage our baseline analysis work in these previous sections has been undertaken on the basis of a review of existing published information and desktop archival / historical research. A physical site visit has not been undertaken by our team as part of this assessment due to adherence of the proper health and safety requirements in light of COVID-19. However, a virtual site visit has been made utilising available aerial photography, Google Earth mapping, OS mapping and also survey and photographic material from others within the wider team. This supplements our existing knowledge and experience drawing on past research into the historical development of Reading and also numerous site visits undertaken over recent years to the town centre, including the Market Place, for other development proposals. In addition, computer modelling provided by the appointed scheme architects for this project have been of particular assistance in completing our assessment of likely heritage impacts for this new site. Our statements of heritage significance are deliberately focussed and proportionate to the

¹ MHCLG, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 – para. 189.

importance of both the overlapping heritage assets, and the nature and extent of the development proposed to effect them.

- 1.11 **Section 5** provides an overview of the application proposals and an assessment of their likely impacts on the particular significance of each of the heritage assets identified in the baseline **Sections 2-4**. These heritage impacts are then assessed overall in light of the statutory duties of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, national policy in the NPPF 2019 and supported by NPPG, and local planning policy and guidance for change within the historic environment. The relevant legislative and policy context is also set out in full in **Appendix 3**.
- 1.12 This Heritage Statement report is intended to be read in conjunction with the full drawings package and Design and Access Statement (DAS) prepared by the appointed architects for this scheme T P Bennett, and also the overarching Planning Statement prepared by Turley South East, all as part of the full application submission material.
- 1.13 **Section 6** finally draws together a summary of the findings and conclusions of this report with regard to heritage impact assessment.

2. Heritage Assets

Introduction

2.1 The NPPF 2019 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”.²

Designated Heritage Assets

2.2 Designated heritage assets are those which possess a level of heritage interest that justifies designation and are then subject to particular procedures in planning decisions that involve them. A designated heritage asset is also defined as:

“A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation”.³

Conservation Area: Market Place / London Street



Figure 2.1: Extract of Conservation Area townscape appraisal map⁴

2.3 The Site is located within the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area; with the boundary of this designated area lies immediately to its eastern edge. This area was first designated by Reading Borough Council in 1972. A map of the conservation area

² MHCLG, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 - Annex 2: Glossary

³ MHCLG, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 - Annex 2: Glossary

⁴ RBC, Market Place / London Street Conservation Area Appraisal, 2007

boundary is included in **Appendix 1**.

- 2.4 The Market Place / London Street Conservation Area Appraisal document was adopted by Reading Borough Council in 2007. An extract from the conservation area townscape appraisal map (character area 1) within the document is included at **Figure 2.1**, and also in full at **Appendix 1**. The boundary of the conservation area is indicated by a thick black line, statutory listed buildings are coloured red⁵, and “buildings of townscape merit” that are defined as positive contributors within the context of the conservation area designated are coloured green. Other annotations are described in full in the appendix.
- 2.5 It is our assessment that proposed development at the Site would affect the character and appearance of the conservation area as a designated heritage asset directly. This is the key built heritage consideration for this scheme.

Listed Buildings

- 2.6 No listed buildings are located within the Site, but a number of statutorily listed buildings lie within the local area. It is our assessment that the proposed development on the Site has the potential to affect the significance of nearby listed buildings through change to their shared townscape settings and views. This is an indirect impact, and a further built heritage consideration assessed in this report. The listed buildings scoped in for the purposes of our assessment are as follows:
- Nos.1-2 Market Place (Grade II listed building)
 - Nos.13-16 Market Place (Grade II listed building)
 - Nos.7 & 8 High Street (Grade II listed buildings)
 - The Obelisk, Market Place (Grade II* listed building)
 - Nos.48-52 Market Place & 10 High Street (Grade II listed buildings)
 - Nos.3-5 King Street (Grade II listed building)
 - Nos.23-34 Market Place & Corn Exchange Arcade Entrance (Grade II listed buildings)
 - Church of St Laurence (Grade I listed building)
- 2.7 A number of other listed buildings are located within the wider vicinity of the Site. However, given the relatively contained nature and extent of the proposals and also the character of the local street pattern and urban form / scale, it has been determined that this development on Site would not impact upon the significance of these other heritage assets, which are therefore scoped out.
- 2.8 A map of these listed buildings is provided by Historic England⁶ through their on-line mapping resource (extract below at **Figure 2.2**), also including access to the List Entries

⁵ As informed by the published Historic England The National Heritage List for England (web resource) we have identified that the identification of 10-12 The Forbury as a statutory listed building has been made in error. This may instead relate to the designation of 10-12 Abbots Walk as a grade II listed building group to the east and outside this conservation area

⁶ Historic England, The National Heritage List for England (web resource)

for each as also summarised in **Appendix 2**.



Figure 2.2: Extract of The National Heritage List for England (blue triangles indicate the location of listed buildings)

Non-Designated Heritage Assets

- 2.9 The NPPF identifies that heritage assets include both designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).⁷
- 2.10 Reading Borough Council Reading Borough Council maintains a 'list of locally important buildings and structures', which has existed since February 2013 and continues to be added to in a piecemeal fashion. The Reading Sites and Detailed Policies Document (SDPD) 2012 established that that the Council intend to develop such a local list. It is our assessment that the significance of no locally listed buildings as identified to date would be affected by the proposed development on Site either directly or indirectly.
- 2.11 The Market Place / London Street Conservation Area Appraisal document 2007 does identify 'buildings of townscape merit' within this conservation area, which are considered to be buildings that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of this heritage asset. These buildings have not been identified by the local planning authority formally as non-designated heritage assets for the purposes of the NPPF, and therefore are not scoped into our assessment.

⁷ MDCLG, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 - Annex 2: Glossary.

3. Historical Development of the Site within Central Reading

- 3.1 The Site (6-8 Market Place) and its building complex is located within the commercial and civic centre of Reading, and also within the historic core of this long established and major Thames-side settlement. Its site occupying a number of now amalgamated and formerly narrower individual historic plots along the east side of the Market Place positions this building at the very heart of the commercial focus of old Reading. Our description of the historical development, and character and appearance, of the surrounding Market Place / London Street Conservation Area, is set out in detail in the next section (**Section 4**) of this report. This is not repeated here in order to avoid repetition, and provides a proportionate understanding and appreciation of the evolution of central Reading as it relates to Market Place and this Site in particular.



Figure 3.1: Postcard of the Market Place looking north dated 1904, with part of the Site and former buildings visible to the right⁸

- 3.2 The adopted Reading Borough Local Plan dating from 2019 provides a succinct description of the Central Reading area, in terms of its historical development and also current projections for its future growth. In summary, it states that:

“The character of the town centre is strongly linked to the history of the town. There is some evidence of Roman settlement, and the name of Reading has Saxon origins, with the original Saxon settlement in the vicinity of St Mary’s church. The development of Reading Abbey, founded in 1121, was a major economic stimulus for the town. The historic core of the centre dates from medieval times, around the three medieval churches of St Laurence’s, St Giles’ and St Mary’s. Reading was mostly contained within its medieval boundaries until the end of the 18th century, when the town began to

⁸ Berkshire Archives and Local Study Centre

expand as a result of improved transport links (including transformation of the River Kennet into a canal, linking Reading with other areas), and industrialisation. Reading's emergence as an industrial centre is largely attributable to the arrival of the Great Western railway in the mid 19th Century.

The opening of the Inner Distribution Road (IDR) in 1960 transformed the town centre, with changes to the physical appearance of Reading, including alterations to the historic street pattern, the loss of historic buildings, and dissection of the town centre. Parts of Reading's historic core were demolished during the mid 20th Century, to make way for more modern developments. However, much of historical merit remains.

More recently, there has been substantial new development within the centre. The opening of the Oracle centre in 1999 helped to establish Reading as one of the leading shopping locations in the UK. More recently, Reading station has been transformed, increasing passenger capacity and removing a significant bottleneck on the rail network. New public spaces north and south of the station provide a focus for new development. New tall buildings have been developed in the centre, and, with further tall buildings already permitted, the skyline of Central Reading is set to transform ..."

- 3.3 As found today, the existing building on Site (also know a Soanepoint House) dates from the late 1960s and is in use as office accommodation, and also including an active frontage and supporting retail uses at street level to the square. Market Place is the principal elevation of this building, which is articulated into two elements, including one projecting forward as supported by a row of columns to create a short colonnade at street level. This break forward only serves to disrupt the historically shared building line with its older neighbours. The street elevation is a mix of glazing and concrete panels with a repeating fenestration pattern and a strong horizontal emphasis. To the upper levels the building's form steps back sequentially from the square and also includes elements of roof top plant and service structures / core.



Figure 3.2: View (east) of the Market Place elevation of Soanepoint House dated 2020 (T P Bennett)



Figure 3.3: View (north) of the Market Place elevation (T P Bennett)

- 3.4 The Site is large and extends to the full depth of the urban block on this side of the Market Place, and to the rear address a shared service road accessed from the south from Abbey Square, and also linking up to The Forbury to the north. The building complex is formed from a series of interlocking blocks that rise up to six storeys in height (including a parking undercroft at the rear and service structures at roof level). These blocks step down to Abbey Square to the south east. The materiality continues relentlessly as concrete panels, also with utilitarian brickwork to inner elevations. Open car parking accommodated within the centre and also rear (east) area of the Site.



Figure 3.4: View of the service road and bay to rear (east) of Site from Abbey Square (T P Bennett)

- 3.5 The recognised The Buildings of England⁹ series (and volume for Berkshire) records that this Site and building forms part of the post war rebuilding of large parts of both east and west sides of the Market Place following extensive bomb damage. It forms part of:

“... a scheme of 1965 by Sir R. Matthew, Johnson- Marshall & Partners. Its uninspiring aim was a near-unbroken run of office frontages on pilotis, faced with upright fins.”

- 3.6 Looking further back into the history of the Site, our online research indicates that the Market Place is a more anciently established urban space and focus of trade than the many various historic and also more modern buildings that enclose it today. The survival of a group of early 17th century buildings on the north west side of the square (27-28 and former The Coopers PH) attests to this late Medieval history, and the near contemporary 1611 John Speed map of Reading confirms that each sides of this triangular space were built up from at least this time (**Figure 3.5**).



Figure 3.5: Extract of John Speed's Atlas of Great Britain 1611¹⁰

- 3.7 The first fully detailed Ordnance Survey map of the town centre dates from 1877 and again illustrates the distinctive triangular plan form of the Market Place, although by this time as part of a far more densely / intensively development townscape as the scale and prosperity of the commercial heart of Reading had grown into the Victorian period (**Figure 3.6**). The location of the Site near to the old Town Hall to the north, and parish Church of St Lawrence, and connection to other key streets including the little High Street immediately to the south positions it within the historic civic and commercial core of the town. The buildings on the Site at that time form part of a large terrace addressing Market Place on its east side, with a more intricate pattern of courtyards (even gardens) and alleyways or lanes within the urban block. The line of the street of Abbey Square to the south west remains as found today, and there are comparable links through to the north and The Forbury (including Forbury Gardens – laid out in the mid 19th century as public gardens on the grounds of the former Reading Abbey precinct).

⁹ Pevsner, N, Tyack, G, Bradley, S. The Buildings of England: Berkshire, 2010

¹⁰ Berkshire County Record Office

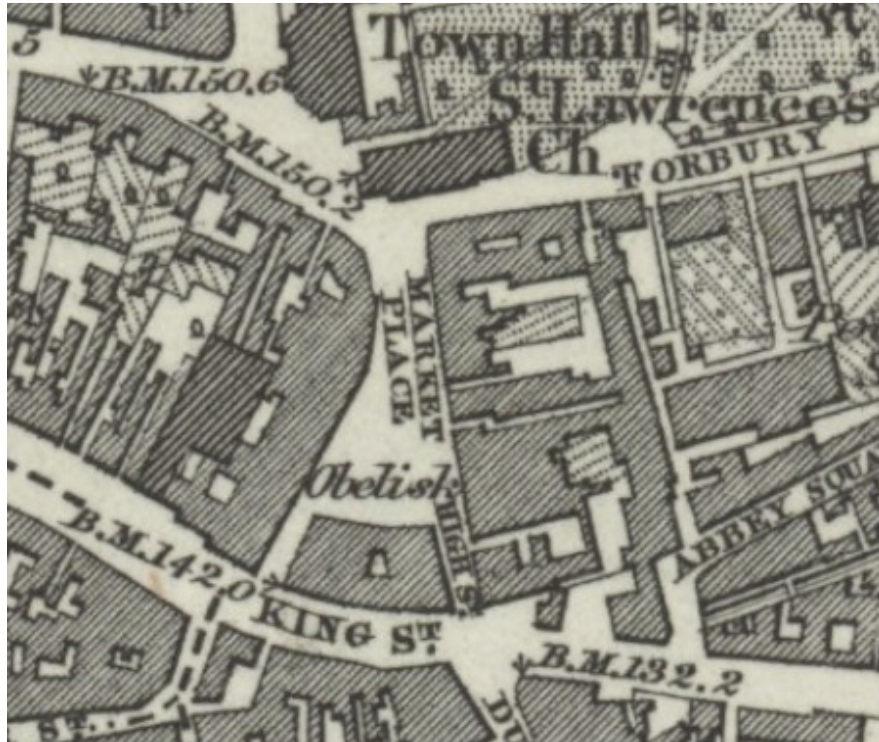


Figure 3.6: Extract of Ordnance Survey (OS) map dated 1877



Figure 3.7: Photograph of the Market Place looking south along the east side dated 1875, with the Site and its buildings visible at that time¹¹

- 3.8 Historic England has an excellent collection of historic photographs of key streets and spaces within Reading as part of their archive. The earliest view of the Site dates from 1875 (**Figure 3.7**) which is looking south from the top of the Market Place towards the High Street. Still surviving historic buildings can be observed in this photograph, including the landmark Simeon Monument within the centre of the square and 52 Market Place /

¹¹ Historic England Archives

10 High Street at the south east corner. The Site itself is occupied in part by a striking ensemble of Gothic Revival inspired (and also other historicist designed / Classical) commercial buildings. These buildings represent a sequence of historically narrower plots on the east side of the square that were later amalgamated and unified by the post war redevelopment scheme. A later photograph of this side of the Market Place is also included here from 1890 (**Figure 3.8**), as well as a comparison view from 1904 looking back north towards the Church.



Figure 3.8: Photograph of the Market Place looking south along the east side dated 1890, with the Site and its buildings visible¹²



Figure 3.9: Photograph of the Market Place looking north dated 1905, with part of the Site and former buildings visible to the right¹³

¹² Historic England Archives

¹³ Historic England Archives



Figure 3.10: Extract of Ordnance Survey (OS) map 1900



Figure 3.11: Extract of Ordnance Survey (OS) map 1938

- 3.9 Photographic and also map evidence from the later part of the 19th century indicates that the northern part of the Site (and the Gothic Revival buildings) was the “Royal Berkshire Seeds Establishment”. This establishment was run by the Sutton family, who later became well known around the country as high quality seed suppliers. Their

company was founded in 1806 by John Sutton in nearby King Street, and in 1837 he and his sons moved the business to the Market Place, also diversifying from corn suppliers into the flower and vegetable seed trade. The Site is no longer the premises for Suttons Seeds. Map regression through the first half of the 20th century indicates relatively little change to the layout and form of buildings on the east side of the square over this period.

- 3.10 It was during and then immediately after the Second World War that the greatest change occurred to this part of the townscape and also Reading more widely. Extensive enemy bombing during the war necessitated the redevelopment of several sites on both side of the market Place. Instead of the fine grained building line packed with visual interest shown in a late 19th and early 20th century photographs, this side of the ancient square was replaced in large part by more comprehensive and uninteresting modern development alongside the more isolated historic building survivors.



Figure 3.12: View across to the east side of the Market Place dated 2018 (Google StreetView)

4. Heritage Significance

Introduction

- 4.1 The NPPF 2019 defines the significance of a heritage asset as:

“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.”¹⁴

- 4.2 The NPPF defines the setting of a heritage asset as:

“The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.”¹⁵

- 4.3 Historic England has published general guidance with regard to the preparation of statements of heritage significance, and how the proper analysis of the significance of heritage assets should be used to inform an assessment of impacts on that significance as a result of proposed change / application.¹⁶

- 4.4 Historic England also provides guidance¹⁷ in respect of the setting and views of heritage assets, providing detail on understanding setting and views and the associated assessment of the impact of any changes. This presents a series of attributes of a setting which can be used to help assess its contribution to the significance of a heritage asset. These can comprise the asset’s physical surroundings; the experience of the asset; and the asset’s associative attributes.

- 4.5 Historic England has also has provided further guidance in the past for their staff (and others) on their approach to making decisions and offering guidance about all aspects of England’s historic environment.¹⁸ This provides advice on how to assess the contribution of elements of a heritage asset, or within its setting, to its significance in terms of its “heritage values”. These include: evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal. This supplements the established definitions of heritage significance and special interest set out in founding legislation and more recent national planning policy and guidance / advice.

¹⁴ MHCLG, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 – Annex 2: Glossary

¹⁵ MHCLG, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 – Annex 2: Glossary

¹⁶ Historic England: Advice Note 12: Statements of Heritage Significance 2019

¹⁷ Historic England, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets, 2017 (2nd Ed.)

¹⁸ English Heritage (now Historic England) Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance, 2008

Conservation Areas

- 4.6 Conservation Areas are designated by virtue of their special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.
- 4.7 Guidance has been published in respect of conservation areas by Historic England, and this provides a framework for the appraisal and assessment of the special interest and significance of a conservation area.¹⁹

Listed Buildings

- 4.8 Listed buildings are defined as designated heritage assets that hold architectural or historic interest.
- 4.9 The principles of selection for listed buildings are published by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and supported by Historic England's Listing Selection Guides for each building type.²⁰

Assessment

- 4.10 The baseline analysis set out in this Section is proportionate to the importance of both the surrounding conservation area and nearby listed buildings; in terms of the contribution of the Site itself to that designated area or a shared townscape setting, respectively. These statements of heritage significance are intended to provide a sufficient level of description to understand the likely impacts of future change through the proposed development, given its nature and extent.
- 4.11 Our analysis has been undertaken on the basis of a review of existing published information and desktop archival / historical research. A physical site visit has not been undertaken by our team as part of this assessment due to adherence of the proper health and safety requirements in light of COVID-19. However, a virtual site visit has been made utilising available aerial photography, Google Earth mapping, OS mapping and also survey and photographic material from others within the wider team. This supplements our existing knowledge and experience drawing on past research into the historical development of Reading and also numerous site visits undertaken over recent years to the town centre, including the Market Place, for other development proposals. In addition, computer modelling provided by the appointed scheme architects for this project have been of particular assistance in completing our assessment of likely heritage impacts for this new site.
- 4.12 It is recognised that historic, functional and or visual inter-relationships exist between a number of the identified heritage assets, for example where a conservation area provides the key element of the setting of a statutory listed building or buildings that contributes to their significance.

¹⁹ Historic England, Advice Note 1, Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management. 2019 (2nd Ed.)

²⁰ DCMS. Principles of Selection for Designating Buildings, 2018

Market Place / London Street Conservation Area

Historical Development

- 4.13 The settlement of Reading was established at the lowest point of the River Kennet, where it could be forded. The original crossing place was at today's Bridge Street, and here the roads from Oxford, Southampton, Bath and London converged. Reading's location on the Kennet, near its junction with the Thames, means that it is in a favourable position for waterborne trade as well as passing traffic on the roads, and the origins of the settlement are therefore probably commercial.²¹
- 4.14 The foundation of Reading Abbey by Henry I also fostered the growth of the town. This was located in the area of today's Forbury Gardens, transferred to the Benedictine order in the mid-13th century, and grew steadily so that by the mid-14th century it had become one of the richest abbeys in the country.²² Its royal patronage made it one of the main pilgrimage sites in England, and inevitably a population grew up around it which made a living from the many people visiting the town. St Laurence's Church, on the corner of Friar Street and the Market Place, and very close to the former site of the Abbey, was built in the Norman period to serve the population which established itself around the Abbey.
- 4.15 In its earliest years, the principal route through Reading followed Southampton Street, Bridge Street and St Mary's Butts in a north-south direction, past St Mary's Church and the original nucleus of the town. As the influence of the Abbey grew, the route along London Street and Duke Street to the Market Place outside St Laurence Church became more popular, and shifted the focus of the town eastwards. It is this 12th century route which forms the back-bone of the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area.
- 4.16 Reading Abbey was largely destroyed during the Dissolution of the Monasteries, after which its building materials were steadily quarried for reuse elsewhere in the town. Despite the loss of this key draw to the town, Reading continued to thrive on a range of trades and industries, including cloth and leather manufacture, and silk weaving.
- 4.17 One of the first maps to show the town of Reading in detail is John Speed's map or Atlas of Great Britain, surveyed in 1611 (**Figure 4.1**). This shows that the settlement was arranged in a broadly triangular shape to either side of the River Kennet. Friar Street formed one side of the triangle; with Southampton Street, Bridge Street and St Mary's Butts forming a second side, and London Street, Duke Street and Market Place the third. A church is located at each apex: St Laurence's, St Mary's and St Giles'. In Speed's map, the buildings on the application Site comprise a line of closely-packed individual houses and trading establishments, probably occupied by merchants or artisans. This line of buildings helping to enclose the Market Place back onto an area of open ground that extends eastward towards the site of the Abbey.

²¹ *A History of the County of Berkshire: Volume 3*, ed. P H Ditchfield and William Page (London, 1923).

²² Historic England National Heritage List for England.

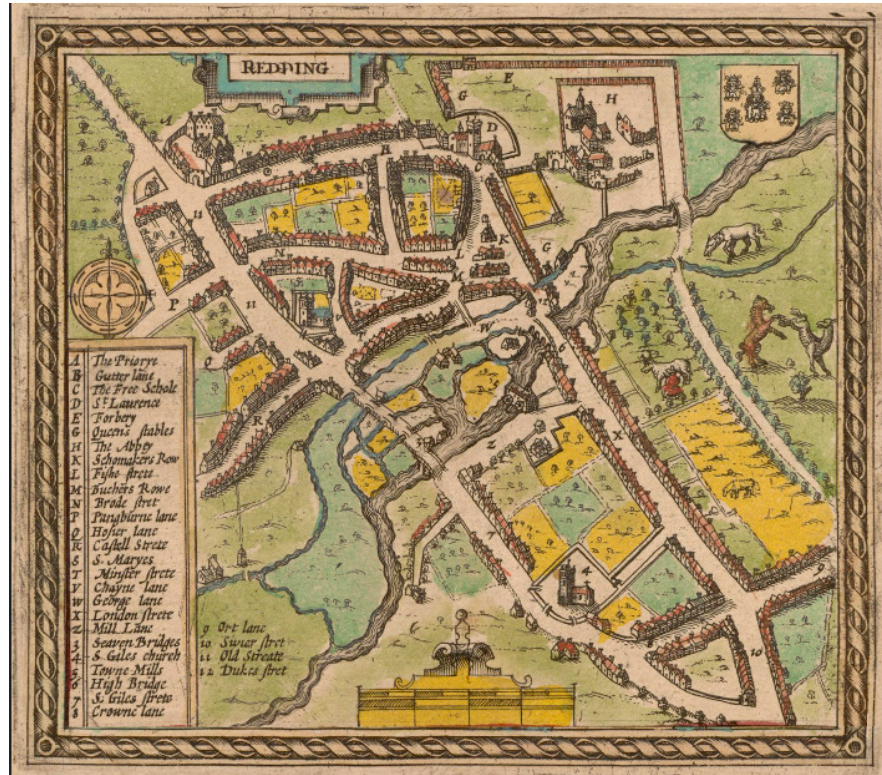


Figure 4.1: John Speed's Atlas of Great Britain 1611



Figure 4.2: John Rocque's Map of Reading 1761 (north point to right)

- 4.18 Rocque's later map of Reading shows that the town remained contained within the Medieval, triangular street pattern well into the 18th century (**Figure 4.2**), although some additional linear development had expanded westwards along Castle Hill and Bath Road, and eastwards along London Road. Whilst the town itself remained relatively contained, its role and reputation grew in importance when work began in the early 18th century to make the both the Rivers Kennet and Avon navigable. This encouraged further trade and connection with Bath and Bristol in the west, and London in the east. Construction began on a canal to connect the two rivers in 1894, and this was completed in 1810. This created a continuous water bourn route between Bristol and London, passing through Reading. His location on a key transport route from east to west across the country caused Reading to flourish as an important layover location for journeys on the waterway.
- 4.19 Both Charles Tomkins' and Edward Weller's maps of Reading, surveyed in 1802 and 1840 respectively, show the town in slightly more detail. To either side of London Street, Duke Street and Market Place the town filled out over the early decades of the 19th century. The Medieval linear development along the three main routes expanded outwards with new streets and development, as a result of the improvements in transport and infrastructure in the town, and its status on the key transport route of the Kennet and Avon Canal (**Figure 4.3**).

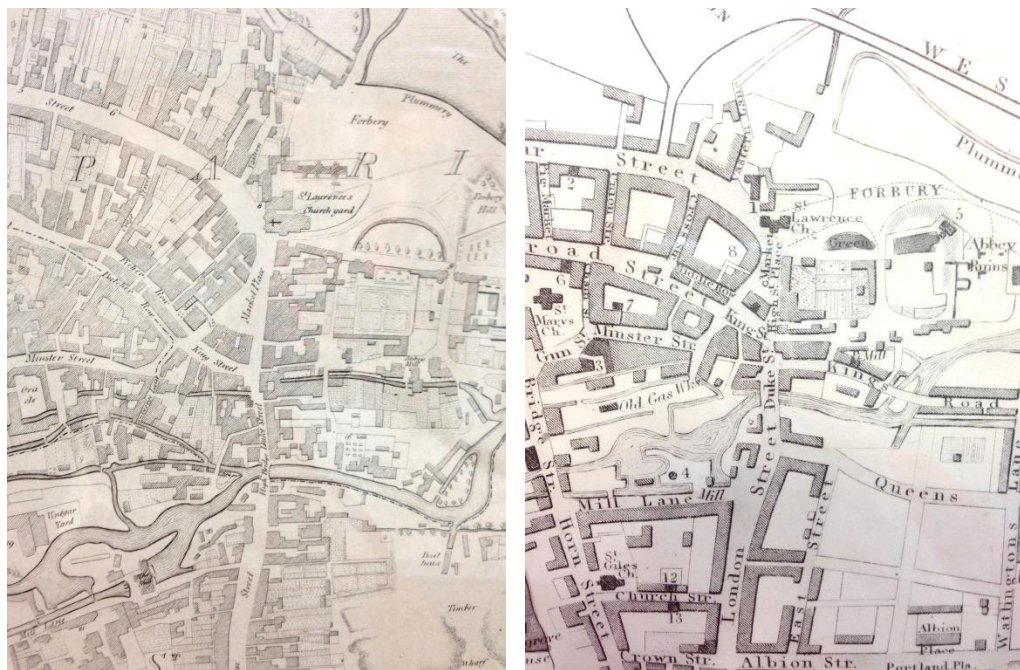


Figure 4.3: Charles Tomkins' 1802 (L) and Edward Weller's 1840 (R) maps of Reading

- 4.20 The Great Western Railway opened through to the town in 1840, and as with the canal, this catalysed further growth and expansion. Major industries now began to be established in the town, including the biscuit manufacturers Huntley and Palmers, which by 1900 was the largest biscuit manufacturer in the world and employed over 5,000 people in the town.



Figure 4.4: Engraving dated 1842 showing the west side of the Market Place, Simeon Monument and St Laurence's Church²³



Figure 4.5: Extract of Ordnance Survey (OS) map 1877

²³ Berkshire County Record Office

- 4.21 An early Ordnance Survey (OS) map of 1877 shows the extent of development in the conservation area over the course of the 19th century (**Figure 4.5**). The linear form of the medieval route of London Street, Duke Street and Market Place remained clearly discernible, along with the Medieval established narrow-fronted plots lining the streets. The most densely developed area was north of the River Kennet, around the Market Place itself, and along the 12th century routes of Broad Street and Minster Street, whilst to the south there remained several areas of gardens, small orchards and open ground. Additional streets had been laid with groups of terraced housing out to either side of the main spinal route, and industrial uses were concentrated along the banks of the river.
- 4.22 This is the first survey to show the individual building plots within the building lines of each street, including the Site at 6-8 Market Place at this time (as discussed previously in **Section 3**). The Town Council Chamber and Offices are extant, having been completed in 1875, and also demonstrating the growing civic profile and commercial influence of this town. The adjacent Concert Hall was added between 1879 and 1882, whilst the Art Gallery and Museum were constructed in 1897, as part of a large public complex. In *A History of the County of Berkshire*²⁴, written in 1923, the town's 19th century growth is described as:
- "Reading has grown very rapidly of late years; a great increase of population took place at the end of the 19th century, when the nearer western suburbs were laid out, but in 1850 it was still a small and pretty town, whose wider streets and open green spaces counteracted many of the evils of defective sanitation."*
- 4.23 By the mid-20th century, the Ordnance Survey map of 1947 shows that Reading had continued to grow outward and the townscape also become much denser at its commercial and civic centre. The early established triangular street pattern had been both in-filled and surrounded by further streets of housing and industry (**Figure 4.6**). However, the medieval street pattern of London Street, Duke Street and Market Place remained clearly legible, with its fine-grained street pattern of narrow-fronted plots fronting the road. It has also been noted in **Section 3** previously that the centre of Reading sustained significant damage during the Second World War, including to the historic Market Place and the Site itself. As is the story of many large town and cities in England during the post war period, a combination of the clearance of bomb sites and new modern comprehensive developments has had a substantial impact on the structure, fabric and look of the centre as found today.
- 4.24 Accordingly, in the late 20th century a great deal of redevelopment occurred in the town, which included the removal of parts of the historic core to construct modern office buildings and shopping centres. Many buildings along the east and west sides of the Market Place were renewed, along with the buildings at the eastern end of Friar Street nearby. Larger-scale redevelopment has occurred close to the Inner Distribution Road, which was constructed between 1969 and the late 1980s. It is this road, more than any other late 20th century development, which has impacted upon the character of the conservation area and the town as a whole. It now bisects the conservation area just south of the river, and involved the demolition of a great deal of the historic core.

²⁴ *A History of the County of Berkshire: Volume 3*, ed. P H Ditchfield and William Page (London, 1923).



Figure 4.6: Extract of Ordnance Survey (OS) map 1947

Character and Appearance

General Characteristics

- 4.25 The scale of buildings in the conservation area generally varies between two, three and four storeys, also with a lesser number of modern office developments reaching five storeys. The recent development scheme immediately to the south of the Site (to the backland area of Jackson's Corner frontage) is an example of a five storey introduction to this townscape. Just beyond the boundaries of this part of the conservation area (to the east of the Market Place) the regenerated office core to the south of The Forbury and north of King Street introduces a greater scale and height; as appreciated in local views.
- 4.26 The predominant building material within the historic core is brick, in a variety of colours / patterning and often stuccoed, contributed principally by the evolved historic 17th, 18th and 19th century building stock. There are also some very few surviving examples of timber-frame construction from the earliest period, such as at 27 and 28 Market Place, 88 London Street and 3-5 London Road. The Medieval churches of St Laurence and St Giles stand out in their use of flint and stone; a distinctive building material demonstrating the importance of these ecclesiastic landmarks. Twentieth century redevelopments sometimes conforms to the preponderance of brick construction, but in several places a less-sympathetic material palette has been introduced, using concrete panels or extensive glazing for example. There are instances of post war buildings that have paid little heed to their historic context in terms of scale, materiality or detailed design, such as the Site building itself. Overall this area is characterised by diversity in the character and appearance of buildings; as a result of the piecemeal development and redevelopment of plots over a long period of time, albeit within an earlier established street pattern (**Figure 4.7**).



Figure 4.7: Diversity of the built townscape within the conservation area

- 4.27 Several buildings in the conservation area, particularly along London Street, have retained 19th and early 20th century shopfronts which testify to the importance of this commercial route historically, as a main approach road to the town's Market Place and principal shopping area on Broad Street. The predominant use in the conservation area remains commercial, though there is a small proportion of residential use to the upper levels of buildings along the main route, and a more prevalent residential character to secondary roads such as Church Street and South Street.



Figure 4.8: The graveyard of St Laurence's Church is one of the few areas of open green space in the conservation area

- 4.28 The bridge over the River Kennet on Duke Street creates a break in the building line along the road which, coupled with the mature tree on the river bank, creates a welcome hiatus to the densely-packed frontage. The river is an important feature of the conservation area, where it reflects the motive for Reading's original settlement in this

location. Aside from the open space created by the watercourse, the only other open spaces in the conservation area are the graveyards of St Laurence's Church, St Giles' Church and the Friends Meeting House on Church Street (**Figure 4.8**).

Character Area 1

- 4.29 The Market Place / London Street Conservation Area Appraisal divides the conservation area into four different "Character Areas" or sub-areas²⁵. The area of London Street to the south of the Inner Distribution Road is identified as Area 1. This strongly linear route is very broad, which creates long views up its length, taking in the buildings which line each side. These building lines contain a mixture of architectural styles and ages, and represent a broad cross section of individual plots dating from several centuries in the development of the town (**Figure 4.9**). Some remain from the 16th and 17th phase in the development of the town, whilst a greater number of 18th and 19th century elegant houses have survived to reflect the popularity of this area as a fashionable part of town.



Figure 4.9: Area 1: London Street is a broad, strongly linear route, with a high number of surviving historic buildings

- 4.30 The majority of buildings fronting London Street are either listed, or identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal as buildings of townscape merit, and this high concentration of historic buildings contributes to a high-quality townscape with plenty of visual interest. The historic buildings in this character area are interspersed with a small amount of modern redevelopment; primarily focussed along East Street at the eastern boundary of the conservation area, and to the north and south ends of London Street. To the immediate south of the Inner Distribution Road, however, there is an area of much larger-scale office redevelopment which does not reflect the finer grained street scene on London Street to the south, and diminishes the historic character of the area.
- 4.31 Historically, London Street was primarily residential in character and use, but overtime commercial premises have occupied the majority of the buildings along this medieval street, and it is now characterised by a preponderance of business and professional uses. As one of the original principal routes through the town, it has also historically been fairly wide. Today, modern alterations to the road to create bus stops and lay-by parking have increased the vehicular traffic and dominance of the road way so that the street's

²⁵ Reading Borough Council. Market Place / London Street Conservation Area Appraisal. 2007