

71-73 Caversham Road

Reading

HERITAGE & TOWNSCAPE ASSESSMENT | OCTOBER 2019

On behalf of S2 Caversham Ltd.



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Section 1

Introduction.

1.1 This Heritage & Townscape Statement report is supplied to provide an assessment of the significance of 71- 73 Caversham Road, Reading (henceforth 'the Site'), and the impact the proposed development on the Site would have on the surrounding area. This is provided as part of a planning application submission following the first pre-application meeting held on 10th June 2019, a presentation to the Design Review Panel, written feedback in the pre-application response letter dated 5th July 2019, and a site visit with officers and local councilors on 10th July 2019.

1.2 This scheme proposes the demolition of an existing two storey brick commercial building which fronts Caverham Road and the construction of a seven to six storey mixed use retail/ residential building with high quality architecture and materials. The revised scheme has taken the comments provided during the pre-application, including feedback from the Council's Heritage Consultant, notably by reducing the maximum height of the proposed scheme from eight to seven storeys.

1.3 The existing Site and surrounding area was appraised during a site visit (June 2019), and a desk-based study was also undertaken which included review of an Ordnance Survey map regression from 1877 to present. Additional information was sought through research into the history of maltings in England and local newspaper reports.

1.4 This report will:

- Set out the relevant legislative and policy framework within which to understand the proposed redevelopment of the Site, with a focus on the policy and guidance relating to non-designated heritage assets;
- Provide a proportionate and robust analysis of the Site and surrounding area's historic development;
- Describe and appraise the heritage significance of the Site and identify its contribution to wider townscape character; and,
- Provide an full and detailed assessment of impact for the proposals on the Site and wider townscape character.

1.5 The report is produced by Icen Projects. Specifically, it is authored by Lucy Williams BA (Hons) MA, Heritage Assistant, and Tom Brooks BA (Hons) MA PGDip IHBC, Associate, Heritage, with guidance and review by Laurie Handcock MA (Cantab) MSc IHBC, Director – Heritage.



Figure 1.1 Site location highlighted in red

Section 2

Planning Legislation, Policy & Guidance.

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019)		Planning Practice Guidance ("PPG") (Department for Communities and Local Government, last updated July 2019)	
2.1	In July 2018, the government published the updated National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF") (updated again February 2019). This maintains the focus on the 'golden thread' of sustainable development that was established as the core of the previous, 2012, NPPF.	2.11	Paragraph 193 states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. It emphasises that the weight given to an asset's conservation should be proportionate to its significance, and notes that this great weight should be given irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.
2.2	This national policy framework encourages intelligent, imaginative and sustainable approaches to managing change. Historic England has defined this approach, which is reflected in the NPPF, as 'constructive conservation': defined as 'a positive and collaborative approach to conservation that focuses on actively managing change...the aim is to recognise and reinforce the historic significance of places, while accommodating the changes necessary to ensure their continued use and enjoyment' (Constructive Conservation in Practice, Historic England, 2009).	2.12	Paragraph 194 states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.
2.3	Section 12, 'Achieving well-designed places', reinforces the importance of good design in achieving sustainable development, by ensuring the creation of inclusive and high quality places. This section of the NPPF affirms, in paragraph 127, the need for new design to function well and add to the quality of the surrounding area, establish a strong sense of place, and respond to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities).	2.13	Paragraphs 195 and 196 address the balancing of harm against public benefits. If a balancing exercise is necessary (i.e. if there is any harm to the asset), considerable weight should be applied to the statutory duty where it arises. Proposals that would result in substantial harm or total loss of significance should be refused, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss (as per Paragraph 195). Whereas, Paragraph 196 emphasises that where less than substantial harm will arise as a result of a proposed development, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of a proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.
2.4	The guidance contained within Section 16, 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment', relates to the historic environment, and developments which may have an effect upon it.	2.14	Paragraph 197 requires a balanced judgment for proposals that affect non-designated heritage assets, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
2.5	Heritage Assets are defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF 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. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).' Listed buildings and Conservation Areas are both designated heritage assets.	2.15	Paragraph 200 encourages opportunities for new development within, and within the setting of, Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites. Paragraph 201 notes that not all elements of Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites will contribute to their significance, but that, if harm to their significance is caused, decisions should follow the balancing exercise set out in paragraph 195 or 196, as appropriate.
2.6	'Significance' is defined as 'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance'.	2.16	The guidance on Conserving and enhancing the historic environment in the PPG supports the NPPF. Paragraph 002 states that conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change that requires a flexible and thoughtful approach, and that neglect and decay of heritage assets is best addressed through ensuring that they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation.
2.7	The 'Setting of a heritage asset' is defined 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'.	2.17	Paragraph 006 sets out how heritage significance can be understood in the planning context as archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic, defined as follows: - archaeological interest: As defined in the Glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework, there will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. - architectural and artistic interest: These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skill, like sculpture. - historic interest: An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history, but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.
2.8	Paragraph 187 requires local authorities to maintain or have access to a historic environment record. This should contain up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area and be used to assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to their environment.	2.18	The PPG emphasises in paragraph 007 the importance of assessing the nature, extent and importance of a heritage asset in understanding the potential impact and acceptability of development proposals.
2.9	Paragraph 189 states that, when determining applications, local planning authorities should require applicants to describe the significance of the heritage assets affected and any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail provided should be proportionate to the significance of the asset and sufficient to understand the impact of the proposal on this significance. According to Paragraph 190, local planning authorities are also obliged to identify and assess the significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal and should take this assessment into account when considering the impact upon the heritage asset.		
2.10	Paragraph 192 emphasises that local planning authorities should take account of: the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.		

2 | Planning Legislation, Policy & Guidance

- 2.19 Paragraph 18 explains that, where potential harm to designated heritage assets is identified, it needs to be categorised as either less than substantial harm or substantial harm (which includes total loss) in order to identify which policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraphs 194-196) apply. It goes on to state that whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision-maker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the policy in the National Planning Policy Framework. In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest.
- 2.20 Harm may arise from works to the heritage asset or from development within its setting. A thorough assessment of the impact on setting needs to take into account, and be proportionate to, the significance of the heritage asset and the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance and the ability to appreciate it.
- 2.21 The PPG also provides clear guidance in paragraph 020 on the meaning of ‘public benefits’, particularly in relation to historic environment policy, including paragraphs 193 to 196 of the NPPF. The PPG makes clear that public benefits should be measured according to the delivery of the three key drivers of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental outcomes, all of which are reflected in the objectives of the planning system, as per Paragraph 8 of the NPPF. Public benefits include heritage benefits, and do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits, for example, works to a listed private dwelling which secure its future as a designated heritage asset could be a public benefit.

Guidance on Non-Designated Heritage Assets

- 2.22 The PPG provides a definition of non-designated heritage assets in paragraph 39:
- Non-designated heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in*

planning decisions but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.

- 2.23 A substantial majority of buildings have little or no heritage significance and thus do not constitute heritage assets. Only a minority have enough heritage significance to merit identification as non-designated heritage assets.
- 2.24 Paragraph 40 outlines the process for identifying non-designated heritage assets. Compared to the previous, 2014 version of the PPG, there is a notably increased emphasis on the need for the identification of non-designated heritage assets to be ‘based on sound evidence’.
- 2.25 The new wording on non-designated heritage assets in paragraph 40 states:
- Plan-making bodies should make clear and up to date information on non-designated heritage assets accessible to the public to provide greater clarity and certainty for developers and decision-makers. This includes information on the criteria used to select non-designated heritage assets and information about the location of existing assets.*
- It is important that all non-designated heritage assets are clearly identified as such. In this context, it can be helpful if local planning authorities keep a local list of non-designated heritage assets, incorporating any such assets which are identified by neighbourhood planning bodies. (Advice on local lists can be found on Historic England’s website.) They should also ensure that up to date information about non-designated heritage assets is included in the local historic environment record.*

- 2.26 This new emphasis in the 2019 PPG on the need for decision makers to provide robust and transparent justification for identifying non-designated heritage assets, based on selection criteria, and including them on a published local list, is consistent with Historic England’s good practice guidance document, ‘Local Heritage Listing’ (2016):

a sound, consistent and accountable way of identifying local heritage assets to the benefit of good strategic planning for the area and to the benefit of owners and developers wishing to fully understand local development opportunities and constraints.

- 2.27 Paragraph 40 of the revised PPG also notes that in some cases, non-designated heritage assets can be identified as part of the decision-making process on planning applications, but suggests that this should be as a result of new, previously unavailable, information, ‘for example, following archaeological investigations’.

- 2.28 Meanwhile, paragraph 41 states:
- when considering development proposals, local planning authorities should establish if any potential non-designated heritage asset meets the definition in the National Planning Policy Framework at an early stage in the process. Ideally, in the case of buildings, their significance should be judged against published criteria, which may be generated as part of the process of producing a local list.*

- 2.29 In addition to the PPG definition of non-designated heritage assets cited above, Historic England has published a useful good practice guidance document, ‘Local Heritage Listing’ (2016). This emphasises the importance of formally including non-designated heritage assets on a published local list: a sound, consistent and accountable way of identifying local heritage assets to the benefit of good strategic planning for the area and to the benefit of owners and developers wishing to fully understand local development opportunities and constraints.

- 2.30 Accordingly, the Historic England guidance advocates a cyclical approach to the identification, assessment, ratification, publication and review of non-designated heritage assets, based on selection criteria that are tested through public consultation.

Local Development Plan

- 2.31 Policies within the Reading Borough Local Development Framework, Core Strategy (2008, with alterations adopted 2015) seek to guide decisions on planning applications where the Council feels a more distinctive approach is needed.

- 2.32 Policy CS7: Design and the Public Realm
- All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, including:*

- *Layout: urban structure and urban grain;*
- *Landscape;*
- *Density and mix;*
- *Scale: height and massing; and*
- *Architectural detail and materials.*

These will be assessed to ensure that the development proposed makes a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives:

- *Character - a place with its own identity and sense of place*
- *Continuity and enclosure*
- *Quality of the public realm*
- *Ease of movement and permeability*
- *Legibility - clear image and easy to understand*
- *Adaptability – capable of adaptation over time*
- *Diversity – meets a wide range of needs.*

- 2.33 Policy CS15: Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix emphasises that ‘The appropriate density and mix of residential development within the Borough will be informed by: ... The need to achieve high quality design in accordance with Policy CS7’

- 2.34 Policy CS33: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- Historic features and areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings, will be protected and where*

- appropriate enhanced. This will include:
- Listed Buildings;
 - Conservation Areas;
 - Other features with local or national designation, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and historic parks and gardens.
- Planning permission will only be granted where development has no adverse impact on historic assets and their settings. All proposals will be expected to protect and where appropriate enhance the character and appearance of the area in which they are located and for the purpose of ensuring that work is appropriate to the special architectural or historic interest of the listed building.
- 2.35 Paragraph 11.8 of the Core Strategy, relating to Policy CS33, also specifies that:
- The Borough Council is committed to protecting and where appropriate, enhancing the Borough’s historic environment. This includes ensuring that buildings and features of Local architectural and historic interest (which are not necessarily recognised components of the historic environment) are taken fully into account and safeguarded, as appropriate.
- Reading’s List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures
- 2.36 Reading Council has a published ‘List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures’ (last updated May 2019) and this does not include 71-73 Caversham Road. Further detail is set out in the Submission Draft Local Plan as set out below.
- Submission Draft Reading Borough Local Plan (March 2018)
- 2.37 Reading Borough Council are producing a new Local Plan which will replace their current Core Strategy, Reading Central Area Action Plan. The new plan will set out how Reading will develop up to 2036. Of these policies, those which will directly impact the historic environment of the site include:
- 2.38 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 appropriate enhanced.

This will include:

- Listed Buildings;
- Conservation Areas; and
- Other features with local or national significance, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, Ancient Monuments, historic parks and gardens and locally listed assets.

Planning permission will only be granted where the new development makes a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness and has no adverse impact on heritage assets and their settings. All proposals will be expected to protect and where appropriate enhance the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification.

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

The Council will monitor buildings or other heritage assets at risk through neglect, decay or other threats, proactively seeking solutions for assets at risk including consideration of appropriate development schemes that will ensure the repair and maintenance of the asset, and, as a last resort, using its statutory powers.

EN4: LOCALLY IMPORTANT HERITAGE ASSETS

Development proposals that affect locally important heritage assets will be expected to demonstrate that development conserves architectural and historical significance which may include the appearance, character and setting of the asset.

Planning permission may be granted in cases where a proposal could result in harm to or loss of a locally important heritage asset only where it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the development significantly outweigh the asset’s significance. Where it is accepted by the Local Planning Authority

- that retention is not important, recording of the heritage asset should be undertaken and submitted alongside development proposals.
- Replacement buildings should draw upon heritage elements of the previous design, taking cues from the historical qualities that made the previous building significant. This may include appearance, scale and architectural quality.
- 2.39 To support the local list, the Submission Draft Local Plan (March 2018) includes Criteria for Locally Listing Buildings and Structures at Appendix 2. These are as follows:
- Exclusions**
- Buildings and structures will not be considered for the Local List when they are already part of a Conservation Area, Scheduled Monument, or subject to an Article 4 direction relating to historical or architectural interest.
- Principles of Selection for the Local List**
- This guidance sets out the general principles that Reading Borough Council applies when deciding whether a building, group of buildings or structure should be added to Reading’s List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures:
- a. pre-1840: Any building, structure or group of buildings where its/ their original character and form are clearly identifiable.
- b. 1840 - 1913: Any building, structure or group of buildings that is/are of clearly-defined significance in the local context and where elements that contribute to its/ their heritage significance remain substantially complete.
- c. 1914 - 1939: Any building, structure or group of buildings where the elements that contribute to a high level of significance in the local context remain substantially complete.

- d. post-1939: Any building, structure or group of buildings where the elements that contribute to its/ their exceptional heritage significance in the local context are wholly complete and unaffected by inappropriate changes.
- In identifying significance in the local context it must be shown that the building, structure or group of buildings contribute(s) to the heritage of the Borough in accordance with at least one of the significance criteria detailed below:
- Historic interest**
- a. Historical Association
- i. The building or structure has a well authenticated historical association with a notable person(s) or event.
- ii. The building or structure has a prolonged and direct association with figures or events of local interest.
- b. Social Importance
- The building or structure has played an influential role in the development of an area or the life of one of Reading’s communities. Such buildings/structures may include places of worship, schools, community buildings, places of employment, public houses and memorials which formed a focal point or played a key social role.
- c. Industrial Importance
- The building or structure clearly relates to traditional or historic industrial processes or important businesses or the products of such industrial processes or businesses in the history of Reading or are intact industrial structures, for example bridges.
- Architectural interest**
- a. Sense of place
- i. The building or structure is representative of a style that is characteristic of Reading.
- b. Innovation and Virtuosity

2 | Planning Legislation, Policy & Guidance

i. The building or structure has a noteworthy quality of workmanship and materials.

ii. The building or structure is the work of a notable local/national architect/engineer/builder.

iii. The building or structure shows innovation in materials, technique, architectural style or engineering.

c. Group Value

i. The buildings/structures form a group which as a whole has a unified architectural or historic value to the local area.

ii. The buildings/structures are an example of deliberate town planning from before 1947.

Site Specific Policies

2.40 The Site is also subject to other relevant policies in Reading’s adopted and emerging Plans, being located within the Reading Centre boundary, just outside the Major Opportunity Area, and adjacent to the Station Area Cluster of Tall Buildings. Further details of this are set out in the Planning Statement prepared by Quod.

Section 3

Historic Development of the Site and Surroundings.

3 | Historic Development of the Site and Surroundings

Map Progression

- 3.1 The site is on the northern outskirts of Reading town centre. By the date of the first OS map survey in 1877-79, the Site was being used as a Malthouse with several separate buildings, including two fronting Caversham Road, and a longer warehouse behind, with a yard between. Around the mid-19th century the malt tax was repealed and domestic production was replaced with more industrial scale making, meaning the malthouses had to increase in size and were moved out of city centres. Reading had a large brewing industry at this time which it is likely to have benefited from the chalky hills of Berkshire, particularly suited to the growing of malting barley, on top of benefiting from both the water and rail transport routes near to the site.
- 3.2 Following the OS mapping, the site appears to remain in use as malthouses without major change to the buildings up to the 1889-1900 OS map. The maltings are a collection of buildings which have a rectangular build line: two of varying sizes which front Caversham Road and another larger building which is set back behind it. During the 20th century there was rationalisation and amalgamation within the malting industry, as large firms began operating on a national basis and so there was less need for small malthouses alike this example along Caversham Road. As such, by 1900 the building on the Site is no longer labeled as a Malthouse and, the OS survey mapping for 1912 shows how the buildings were beginning to become divided into smaller units.
- 3.3 The area of Reading surrounding the Site can be seen to have developed outwards very rapidly between 1877 and the early 20th century. When first developed the Site was relatively isolated, surrounded northwards by fields and cut off by the railway, however, at the time of 1913 OS survey the surrounding area has been entirely built up with rows of terraced housing and other commercial and industrial uses. At this time the rear building to the west of the site also appears to have been divided into smaller units along its horizontal facade at Northfield Road.
- 3.4 When the 1956-59 OS survey was created the existing malting building on the eastern front site was being used as a warehouse, including a motor accessories warehouse for the nearby Motor

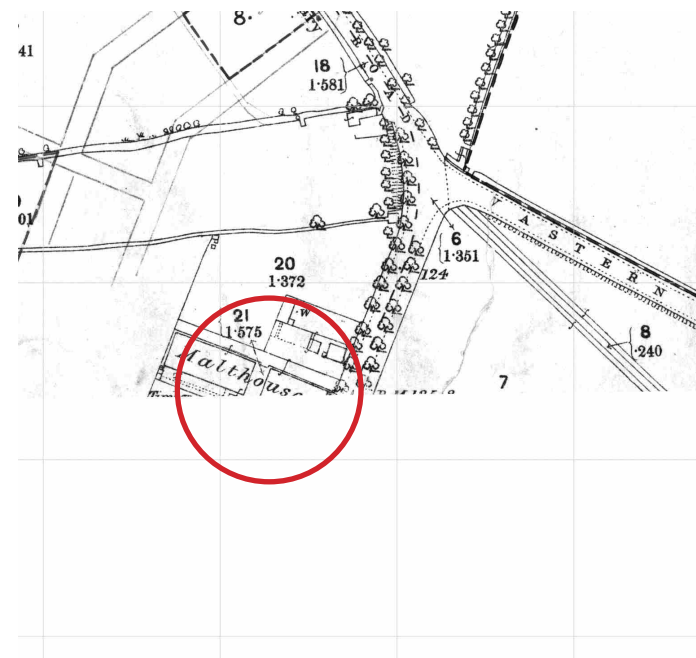


Figure 3.1 OS map of site 1877 © Crown copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey

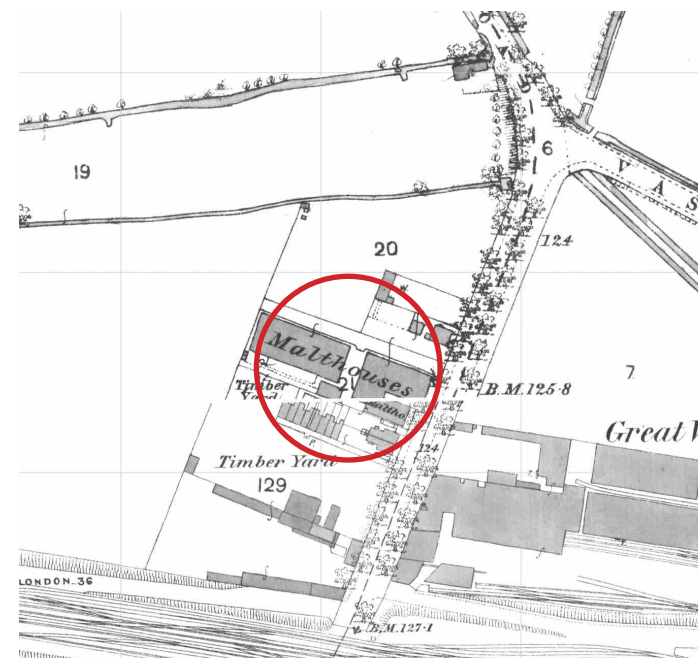


Figure 3.2 OS map of site 1881 © Crown copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey

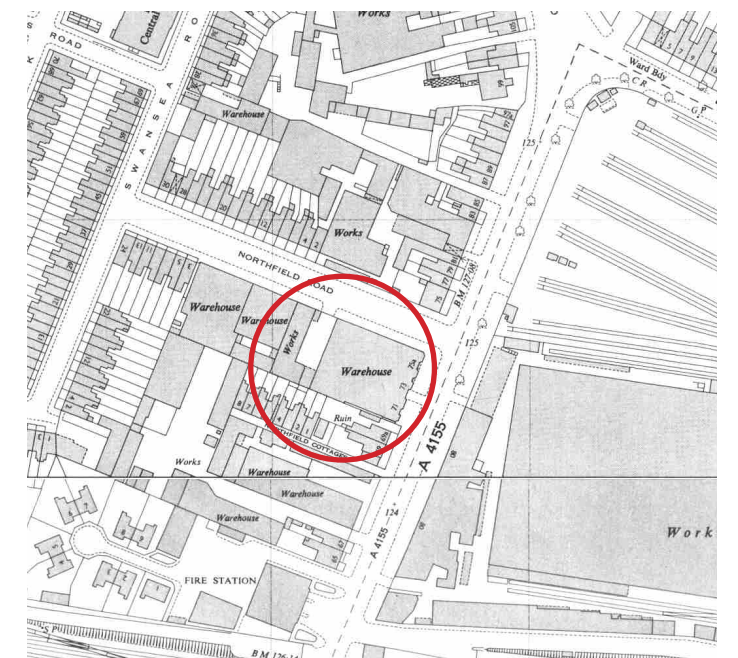


Figure 3.3 OS map of site 1959 © Crown copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey

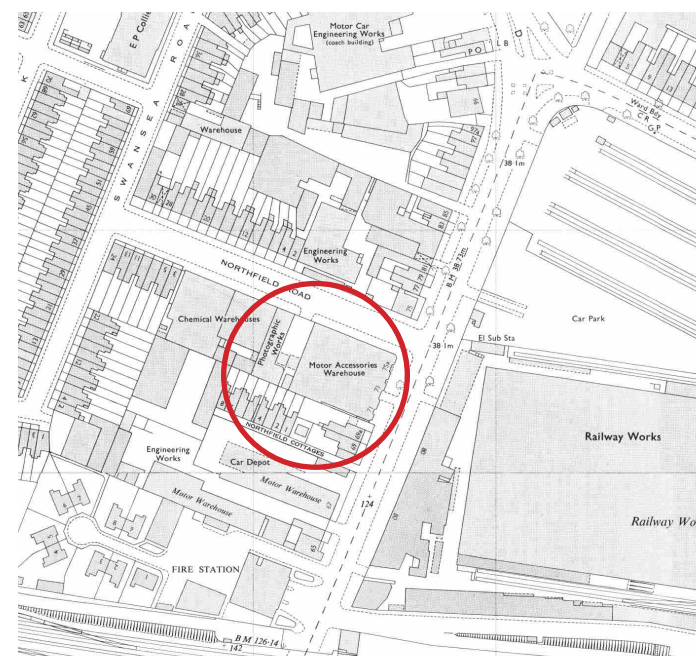


Figure 3.4 OS map of site 1971 © Crown copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey

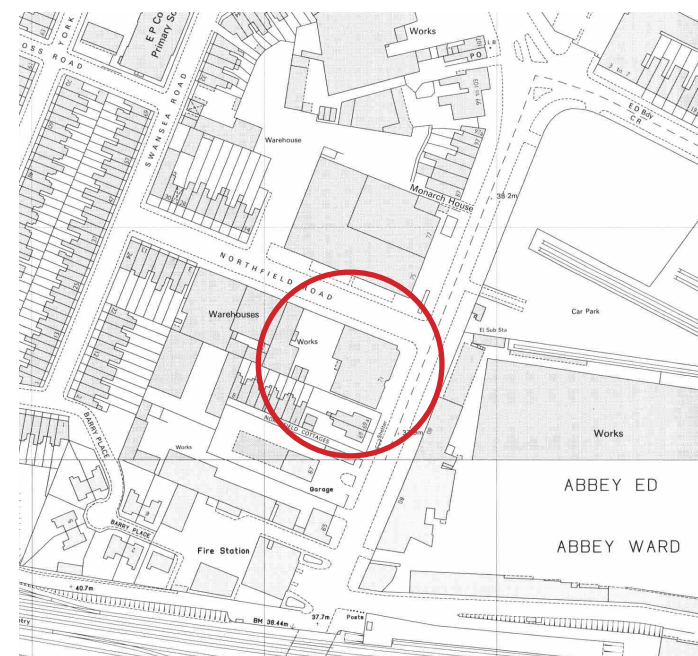


Figure 3.5 OS map of site 1988 © Crown copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey

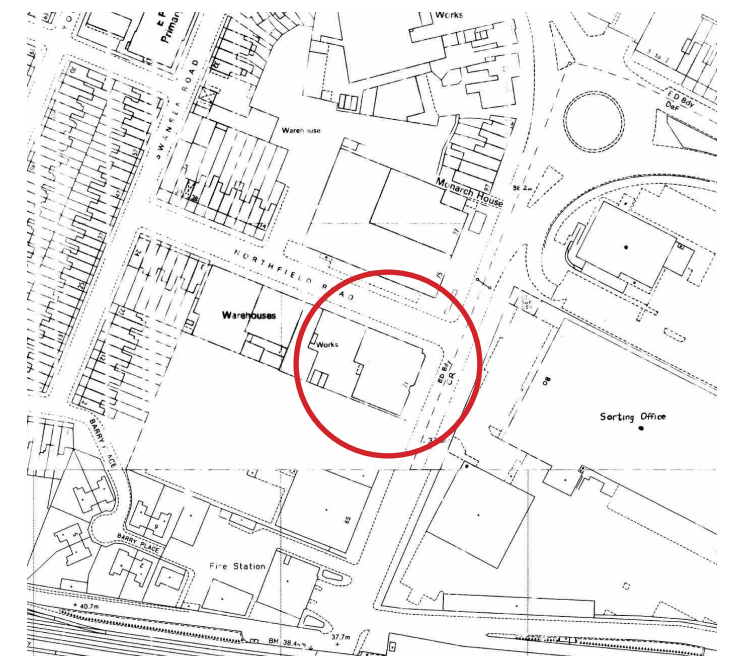


Figure 3.6 OS map of site 1993 © Crown copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey

3 | Historic Development of the Site and Surroundings

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Documentary History

Engineering Works to the North of the site. The further malting buildings at the western edge of the Site, sitting behind are now distinguishable as three connected buildings and were, at this stage, used as photographic works.

3.5 Significant changes to the buildings on the Site are shown on the more recent mapping. The gap between the two buildings along Caversham Road has been infilled in the 1956-59 OS, which appears to have required modifications to the pitched roofs and long narrow plan which are typical of maltings buildings, particularly when viewed along Caversham Road. This may also be when the protruding steel and glass ground floor frontage was added to this elevation of the building. Furthermore, the rear sections of the frontage building were demolished between the time of the 1971 and 1988 OS maps: the rear elevations of the frontage building were wholly reconstructed at this time.

3.6 The 1993 OS survey shows that the warehouses to the west of the site, which were also formerly part of the Maltings, have been demolished. The majority of their front sections remain as part of the Site, though the southern section of the has been divided to forms two seperated building lines. Later, not yet shown in the historic mapping, a through road was created here along the boundary of the remaining buildings for access to new residential apartments.

3.7 The Bell Tower Community Association 'Neighbourhood News' has published a useful pair of articles setting out the historical development of the Site, written by Julia Wink (Appendix A2). Based on these articles, the history of the Site can be summarised as follows:

- In 1870 the Site was owned by John Weldale Knollys, a major local landowner;
- The Site was developed following a new 99 year lease for the land, and the area to the west, granted in 1971, stating that two houses or other buildings must be completed in the next two years;
- The land was leased to Henry Pendlebury Dowson, a maltster who owned two other malthouses in Reading. By 1877 he had borrowed £6,000 to fund development of the Site with the malthouses and other buildings. The malthouse supplied malt to Reading brewers H&G Simonds;
- Caversham Road was vulnerable to flooding, and this caused severe problems for the business (much of which operated on ground floor level), with Dowson making several complaints to the Council about the losses sustained;
- In 1902 Dowson died and all malting activity on the Site ceased;
- In 1903 the lease, including the malthouses, a dwelling house, stabling and other buildings were assigned to Arthur Cooper (a surveyor), Robert Curtis (a builder), and William George Lewton (an architect who designed the York Road Presbyterian Church). This group applied to construct new buildings on Northfield Road, as well as alterations to the existing malthouse on Caversham Road, and converting another building into shops;
- Numerous small scale retail enterprises occupied the shops throughout the 20th century, including a corn, hay and straw merchant; grocer; boot-maker; manufacturing chemist; tailors; toy factory; electrical engineers; motor engineers; electrical wholesalers; and, finally, from 1979, Drews ironmongers, which closed in 2019.



Figure 3.7 Historic image of Caversham Road



Figure 3.8 Historic image of Caversham Road

Section 4

Site Description and Identification of Assets.

4 | Site Description and Identification of Assets

71 - 73 CAVERSHAM ROAD | READING

Front Building

- 4.1 The eastern end of the Site is occupied by a building on the corner of Northfield Road. This is actually formed of two parallel, linked rectangular buildings with pitched roofs, fronting Caversham Road. The building is brick built, two storeys, and was in retail warehouse use until their recent closure. The roofs are hipped and there is corrugated steel roofing sheets along the main body of the northern building. The windows and doors on the ground floor are unsympathetic modern replacements and several openings have been boarded or bricked up, or covered with metal roller shutters. Some window openings still have their original shape, headed with gault brick work and have a typical, regular spaced form. All original windows and doors appear to have been removed. The poor-quality rear elevations wholly date to the demolition of the rear sections of the building in 1971-1988.
- 4.2 Remains of a previous doorway are evident on the north side of the building, facing Northfield Road, with an arched opening with green brickwork that has been bricked up. On this same side, some of the large ground floor windows which are regularly spaced have been boarded up with blue painted sheeting. There are faint tracings of lettering, which most likely spell 'S-M-A-L-L-B-O-N-E', written in white paint across the northern elevation. This which was the name of the motor engineering company that occupied the site in 1925-1947. The rear elevation of the main building was wholly rebuilt in 1971-1988 and is characterised by very poor quality brickwork.
- 4.3 There have been numerous major, unsympathetic 20th century alterations to this building. These include the demolition of a large section (approximately one-third) of the rear of the building in 1977-81, the rebuilding of a large proportion of the interior with a new steel structure, and the associated re-roofing of the building. In addition, infilling the central gap between the two buildings in a similar red brick, and rebuilding large portions of their interiors, has altered the original form and relationship of the two buildings, and harmed the legibility of their historic characters. The steel and glass extension to the ground-floor front of the building is of extremely poor architectural quality and further erodes any merits that may have formerly been held by the building when viewed along Caversham Road.

- 4.4 The interior of this building does not retain any sense of its historic architectural character, due to modernisation schemes for its retail warehouse use. Furthermore, the internal structure of the building appears to have been largely or wholly rebuilt, with a steel framed system of new columns and roof trusses, dating to the 1960s or later, based on their appearance.

Rear buildings

- 4.5 The site also includes two further, two and a half storey buildings to the west, along Northfield Road. As previously mentioned, the original form of these buildings was rectangular, stretching back down Northfield Road, but their form has been truncated through demolition of the rear sections and they are now roughly square on plan. The buildings have pitched, half-hipped roofs, fronting the courtyard opposite the rear of the main building. There is a third building to the south, which is slightly detached from the other two but appears consistent in material and age. It projects slightly outwards into the courtyard. The elevations of these rear buildings are less altered in character than the main building, but their forms have nonetheless been heavily altered by the demolition of large sections of the buildings to the west. These buildings are currently in all use as office space.

Car Park

- 4.6 Inside the Site, between the main building and the rear buildings, is a paved car park and service yard with space for around 10 vehicles. This is gated with unattractive blue painted metal railings.



Figure 4.1 Main building, June 2019



Figure 4.2 Interior of main building, first floor



Figure 4.5 Rear buildings and courtyard, June 2019



Figure 4.3 Interior of main building, first floor



Figure 4.4 Interior of main building, first floor



Figure 4.6 Interior of main building, first floor

4 | Site Description and Identification of Assets

Townscape Context

- 4.7 The location of the Site is a 'transition zone' where the land use and building types are in flux. Due to this, there is a lack of coherent townscape within the wider surroundings along Caversham Road, with a mix of fine grain residential buildings and large-scale commercial units in the same vicinity. There is also a variety of different architectural styles, ages of buildings and materials used. The Site sits next to an unattractive early 1990s two storey, red brick building which measures around 60m across and is currently used for a mix of leisure and retail. Adjacent to the site, northwards along Caversham Road, sits a large three storey modern warehouse-style building clad in white and red metal sheeting. This has an imposing effect on the current building on the Site and the surrounding local townscape due to its inactive frontage, unsympathetic materials and lack of architectural detailing.
- 4.8 On the opposite side of Caversham Road from the Site, the principle maltings building faces a three-storey 1980s office block that turns its back to the road. The office block is connected to a secondary larger commercial building by a raised walkway. Though these buildings are somewhat hidden by semi-mature trees within their boundaries and along the fronting footpath, they present an unattractive edge and are inconsistent with the fine grain detail of the remaining buildings along Caversham Road. Proposals for this site are currently coming forward as part of the Reading Metropolitan development between Caversham Road and Reading Station which include erection of new buildings ranging between basement and 2 – 25 storeys in height at 80 Caversham Road.
- 4.9 There are also some key buildings which add some positive townscape character to the area around the Site, including the stripped Neo-Georgian style Fire Station to the south, built in 1939. This had previously undergone assessment and failed to meet the criteria for its special architectural or historic interest. There are also a series of attractive residential terraced houses and shops which are located behind the site.
- 4.10 The west of the Site is mostly made up of a series of parallel streets, lined with two storey terraced houses. Whilst some have a unified appearance made of red brick with white bay windows, this is

broken up as some have facades built from a variety of materials, including white stucco or palely painted brick. This area behind the Site also includes late 19th Century red brick school a with a distinctive copper roof and carved brickwork, designed by G W Webb. This has an attractive, striking impact on its more residential setting.

- 4.11 In summary, the townscape surrounding the site has, at present, an inconsistent and irregular character in terms of built form and use. This character is also due to change dramatically in the near future as the proposals for increasing the density of the sites to the west of Reading Station come forward.



Figure 4.7 Warehouse building to North of the Site, June 2019



Figure 4.9 Roundabout where Caversham Road meets Vastern Road, North of the Site



Figure 4.8 Office buildings located opposite the Site, June 2019



Figure 4.10 Caversham Road, north of the Site, looking south

- 4.12 The adjacent map shows planning policy designations and relevant contextual information off the area around the Site.
- 4.13 The section of townscape along Carversham Road which the Site sits within is an Office Core part of the town, stretching down to the Reading Town Centre. There is a tall buildings cluster to the allocated to the east of the site and the Central Core lies to just to the north, past Reading Train Station.

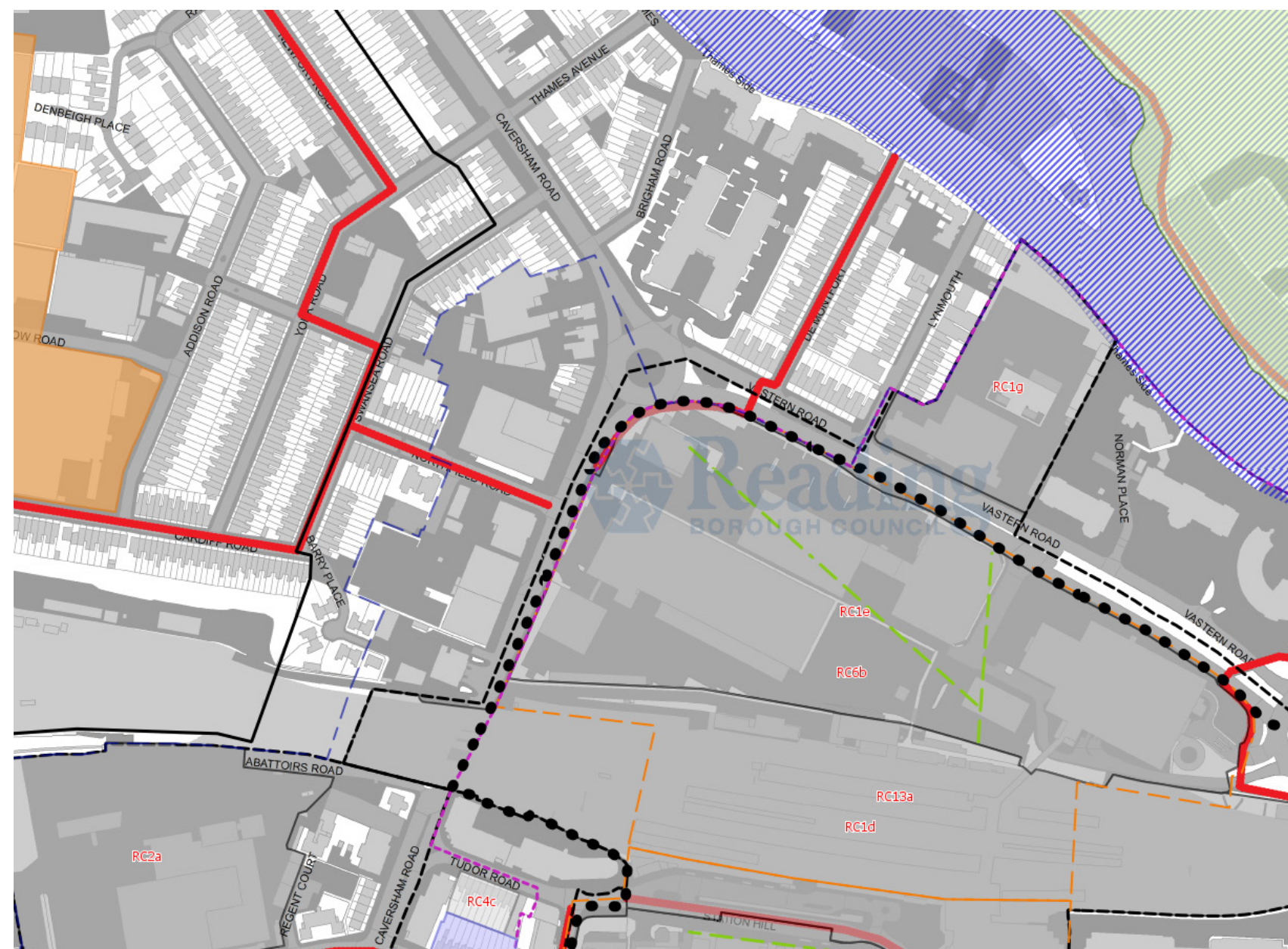


Figure 4.11 Townscape and Planning Constraints Map, Reading Borough Council



Section 5

Assessment of Significance.

5.1	The assessment methodology used here to evaluate the significance of the identified heritage assets and their settings is the framework set out in Historic England's best-practice guidance document Conservation Principles, Policies, and Guidance (2008). Broadly, this proposes the use of four key heritage values – evidential, historical, aesthetic, and communal – in assessing what makes a place and its wider context special.				
5.2	The four values are defined summarily as follows:				
5.3	Evidential value derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.				
5.4	Historical value derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be illustrative or associative.				
5.5	Aesthetic value derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.				
5.6	Communal value derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory. Communal values are closely bound up with historical (particularly associative) and aesthetic values, but tend to have additional and specific aspects.				
Evidential value					
5.7	The building holds some evidential potential in terms of fabric which may exist but be hidden from view at present. However, none of the existing buildings represent a particularly unusual building type, whilst any distinctive external or internal features have been altered already. Any interest inherent in their use as part of the former maltings has been lost through the numerous subsequent retail uses of the building for over a century since the maltings ceased functioning. These have involved numerous alternations and extensions, which are apparent from inspection of the exterior and further limit this potential for evidential value. Given the date of the building, it is unlikely that, archaeologically, the site would elicit any information of any particular evidential interest.				
		Historical value			
5.8	The buildings have no specific connection with particularly important people or events. We have found no evidence of the architect responsible for designing the maltings. This differs from other local malting buildings in Reading which have been listed such as Simmonds Malthouse and 1 Fobney Street which both have very high design quality and are known to be by named architects.				
5.9	We do know that a local architect (William George Lewton) was involved in their conversion to shops at the beginning of the 20th century, but, given the limited extent of his involvement, and the absence of any clear link between that work and the buildings as they exist today, the importance of this documentary connection is minimal.				
5.10	The buildings have been used for commercial purposes since construction: firstly as malthouses, then to warehouses and retail and office uses. These changes of use have involved multiple alterations, extensions, and re-buildings of the original buildings. With regard to the main building along Caversham Road, other than the broad form of its elevations, which mark it as a generic piece of much altered late 19th century industrial architecture, no surviving features are specifically instructive of its malthouse use, which it retained for less than 30 years, from the early 1970s to c.1902.				
5.11	In assessing the historical value of the Site as a former maltings, for a brief period of its early history, it is useful to refer to Historic England's (as English Heritage) Historic Industrial Environment Report on Maltings in England (Patrick, 2004). This report makes clear that, when assessing the significance of former maltings, the survival of internal layouts as indicative of the production process is a key element to a malting's significance, as is the existence of specialist equipment for the process of malting. This includes withering, kilning and storage, none of which can be viable in this case. In the case of the Site, it is clear that its internal layout as a maltings has been wholly erased through demolition, rebuilding, and subsequent retail warehouse uses, removing a critical aspect of understanding the historic value of a maltings building. Equally, no historic machinery or equipment survives, and the building appears as a generic and much altered late 19th century industrial building, with a largely late 20th century retail warehouse character. The Site is not mentioned in the Historic England report, despite it mentioning other surviving maltings in Reading.				
5.12	Furthermore, a comment from the Council's Heritage Consultant at pre-application noted that the front building on the Site 'retains its original character as a maltings building, surrounded by a group of increasingly characterless and soulless modern developments', therefore, suggesting that part of the buildings value stems from its presence in this streetscene. However, it is not correct to assume that a building would have local significance due to the lack of quality of the other buildings within the area, but should instead be assessed through its own merit.				
5.13	The pre-application response letter also notes that the Site is one of 'the last physical remnants of that industry' and these are 'increasingly being lost, making the last vestiges more important locally.' However, our research has shown that there are currently two high-quality Grade II listed maltings in the area, also dating to the 19th century, and a total of eight within the wider county of Berkshire. These make a significant contribution to the brewing history in the area and have retained much more of their original character, hence their statutory listing. Reading's brewing history is, and will continue to be, far better demonstrated by these surviving buildings than by the heavily altered nature of the Site, which is not legible as a former maltings building, due to the extent of alteration since it ceased this function in 1900.				
		Aesthetic value			
5.14	The main maltings building is of very limited aesthetic value. It is a generic late 19th century industrial building, which has been subject to several unsympathetic demolition, extension and alteration schemes, which have cumulatively resulted in an almost total erosion of its architectural character.				
5.15	The most prominent features of the building date from the late-20th or 21st centuries, including the rebuilding of part of the malthouse in red brick with a metal roof and new internal structure, which has removed a substantial amount of earlier phase fabric, and visually jars against the earlier brickwork. There are some minor surviving fragments of aesthetic value to the main building including decorative brickwork around the window openings and green bricks to the blocked-up archway on the north elevation, but these are minor elements of an otherwise generic and substantially altered building.				
5.16	The three further buildings to the rear of the Site have lost their significant long elevations along Northfield Road through demolition, but in general are better survivals in terms of their historic architectural character than the main building, as the front facades have remained largely unaltered despite their change of use and have marginally more aesthetic value.				
		Communal Value			
5.17	The research undertaken has not uncovered any particular communal interest in the 71-73 Caversham Road site. Although some associative communal interest may arise from its previous ownership as a maltings and is associated with brewing in Reading during the industrial revolution, since the building ceased being a maltings by 1900, it is highly unlikely that there is now any shared memory associated with this.				
5.18	As noted above, the Government's recently updated Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states:				
5.19	<i>A substantial majority of buildings have little or no heritage significance and thus do not constitute heritage assets. Only a minority have enough heritage significance to merit identification as non-designated heritage assets. The 2019 revision to the PPG also emphasises that non-designated heritage assets should be formally identified and included on a published list, including information on the criteria used to select them.</i>				
5.20	Equally, the Site does not hold any particular communal value for its myriad retail uses, since the closure of the maltings c.1902. Due to the vast number of different retail activities during this period, as outlined in the articles for the Bell Tower Community Association Neighbourhood News, there is no one use or association which gives the Site particular significance. Although, in living				

5 | Assessment of Significance

memory, the Site has clearly been associated with Drews Ironmongers, since 1979, this is no more significant than any other specialist shop is to its immediate local community, and the communal value of this is therefore limited.

Consideration of the Site as a Non-Designated Heritage Asset

- 5.21 The Government’s Planning Practice Guidance emphasises that only ‘a minority [of buildings] have enough heritage interest for their significance to be a material consideration in the planning process’. As noted above, Reading has published Criteria for Locally Listing Buildings and Structures in its Submission Draft Local Plan (March 2018). For buildings dating to 1840-1913, this requires ‘elements that contribute to its/ their heritage significance remain substantially complete’, alongside an assessment of historic and architectural interest, as carried out above.
- 5.22 Overall, therefore, taking into account the site’s history and the assessment of significance, the buildings are of very limited heritage value. This is due, primarily, to the fact that they only operated as a maltings for approximately 30 years (one-fifth of the life of the buildings), suggesting that they were not particularly economically successful or significant in that use (with notable issues caused by flooding along Caversham Road), and today do not indicate that former use to any degree whatsoever, having lost all internal machinery and layout which may have related to that use.
- 5.23 Furthermore, there is no historical connection to significant people or events; the subsequent, myriad retail warehouse uses that have occupied the buildings since c.1902 do not warrant any particular consideration in terms of historical or communal value; and the buildings have been comprehensively altered by demolition and rebuilding. In particular, the aesthetic form of the main building has been eroded by the extensive modern extensions and alterations, which obscure any architectural interest that the building may have formerly possessed.
- 5.24 The pre-application response letter identifies the Site as being what is called an ‘undesigned

heritage asset’, with the potential to be identified as a ‘non-designated heritage asset’. ‘Undesignated heritage asset’ is not a term that forms part of any planning policy or guidance relating to the historic environment. As set out in the recently revised Planning Practice Guidance, non-designated heritage assets should be ‘identified as such. In this context, it can be helpful if local planning authorities keep a local list of non-designated heritage assets’, such as the list kept by Reading, which explicitly does not include the Site.

- 5.25 In summary, therefore, and with due consideration to the Criteria for Locally Listing Buildings and Structures in the Submission Draft Local Plan, it is our clear view that the main building does not possess sufficient heritage significance to warrant consideration as a non-designated heritage asset in planning decisions concerning the Site.