

**PRINCE REGENT HOUSE, ST GILES CLOSE, READING,
BERKSHIRE**

HERITAGE STATEMENT

JPHERITAGE

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PROJECT: Prince Regent House, St Giles Close, Reading Berkshire

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PRINCE REGENT HOUSE, READING - HERITAGE STATEMENT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared by JP Heritage on behalf of Aspire 108 London Street to inform a proposal for a roof extension to Prince Regent House to accommodate an additional flat. Listed Building Consent and planning permission were granted for a change of use and conversion to 7 flats in 2018 (refs. 181218FUL and 181223LBC).
- 1.1.2 This report provides an outline description of the historic development and character of Prince Regent House and its setting, i.e. St Giles Close. This has been undertaken to meet the requirements of the LPA in accordance with paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, Revised 2019). The report was produced using the guidance contained within the Historic England document entitled *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* (2008).

2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 NPPF (Revised 2019)

- 2.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out national planning policy relating to the conservation of the historic environment. It advises that in determining planning 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* (paragraph 189).
- 2.1.2 Annex 2 of the NPPF defines a Heritage Asset as being '*a building, monument, site, place area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions.*' Heritage assets are the valued components of the historic environment. They include designated heritage assets and non-designated heritage assets.
- 2.1.3 In determining planning applications, the NPPF advises that local planning authorities should take account of (paragraph 192):
- 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.
- 2.1.4 Specific guidance on the treatment of designated heritage assets (Listed Buildings) emphasises the need to understand the significance of a heritage asset in order to determine impacts on the historic environment (paragraph 193). It advises 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 (and the more important the asset, the*

greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

- 2.1.5 Paragraph 194 continues by stating 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'.*

2.2 Submission Draft Reading Borough Local Plan (March 2018)

- 2.2.1 The Reading Borough Local Plan was issued as a draft in May 2017. The relevant historic environment policy for the proposed development is as follows:

- Draft Policy EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

2.3 Reading Core Strategy (adopted January 2008 with alteration adopted 2015)

- 2.3.1 The relevant historic environment policy contained within the Reading Core Strategy is as follows:

- Policy CS33: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment.

Policy CS33 states that:

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.

2.4 Reading Central Area Action Plan (adopted January 2009)

- 2.4.1 Policies contained within the Reading Central Area Action Plan relate to consideration of impacts on the settings of listed buildings and conservation areas. There is a Policy (RC4j) for 25-31 London Street but no specific policy for the southern end of London Street.

2.5 Reading Sites and Detailed Policies Document (adopted 2012)

- 2.5.1 This document refers to guidance set out in the NPPF (2012) and to Policy CS33 of the Reading Core Strategy but does not include additional policies relating to the historic environment.

3.0 UNDERSTANDING THE HERITAGE

3.1 Heritage Designations

- 3.1.1 Prince Regent House is located to the rear of 108 London Street. 108 London Street, Reading was added to the statutory *List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest* at Grade II on 22nd March 1957. The list description reads as follows:

Late C18. 3 storeys, brick on stucco plinth. Stone cills, flat cornice and parapet, stone coping. Old tile roof. Glazing bar sash windows, 3 on upper floors, doorcase to left: pilasters with shaped bracket caps and open moulded dentilled pediment. 6 panelled door and radiating fanlight. Contemporary lead rainwater hind.

- 3.1.2 Prince Regent House is located within the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. The conservation area boundary follows the rear boundaries of properties along London Street and excludes St Giles Close. As note below, St Giles Close was created in the late 1960s to early 1970s and is characterised by modern residential buildings.
- 3.1.3 The area to the rear of 108 London Street has been subject to a number of extensions since the mid-1960s. Prince Regent House replaced these with a replacement 2-storey building and a single storey link in the early 1980s (refs. 83/TP/0452 and 83/TP/0422).

3.2 Historical background

- 3.2.1 The area now occupied by St Giles Close was the site of the Reading Tin Factory. The Reading Tin Factory, or Huntley, Boorne and Stevens, developed from the second half of the 19th century and covered an area between London Street, Crown Street and Southampton Street. The 3rd edition of the Ordnance Survey map (1912) shows the extent of the Tin Factory in the early 20th century.

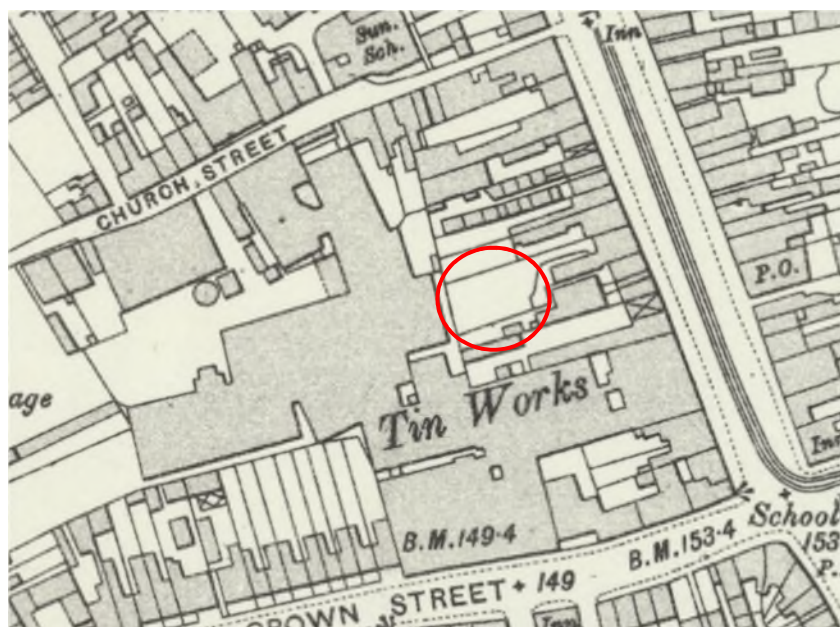


Figure 1: Extract from the 3rd edition of the Ordnance Survey map (1912) showing the Tin Works and the area now occupied by Prince Regent House (circled red)

- 3.2.2 The company moved from this site to a modern factory at Woodley between 1967 and 1969. It was following the demolition of the Reading Tin Works that St Giles Close was laid out. This included new houses along the southern side of Church Street, a large residential development along Crown Street and the creation of a cul-de-sac between Church Street and Crown Street.
- 3.2.3 During the course of the late 20th century extensions were constructed in the rear garden of 108 London Street. Prince Regent House was built to replace these extensions in the early 1980s.

4.0 DESCRIPTION OF PRINCE REGENT HOUSE AND ITS SETTING

4.1 Front elevation facing onto St Giles Close

- 4.1.1 As stated above, Prince Regent House was constructed in the early 1980s to replace existing extensions on the site. The 2-storey element which faces onto St Giles Close is characterised by stretcher bond brickwork, continuous strips of glazing with brick on edge heads to the ground and first floors. The roof is hipped and finished with interlocking concrete tiles. The flanking walls project above eaves level to form a parapet. The flanking walls are blank. There is an open sided porch with timber posts and a hipped roof finished with interlocking concrete tiles on the right hand side of the front elevation.



Figure 2: Front elevation of Prince Regent House

- 4.1.2 There is a parking area in front of Prince Regent House which is enclosed by modern boundary walls. The car parking area has a tarmac surface.

4.2 Character of St Giles Close

- 4.2.1 The eastern part of St Giles Close is characterised by a mix of 2- and 3-storey buildings. Elevations are characterised by the use of a brown bricks and predominantly gabled roofs finished with tiles for the earlier 1970s houses. There are some examples of painted render finishes and hipped roofs. More recent developments are generally of a larger scale, being 3-storeys with attic accommodation. The elevations are characterised by a mix of orange/red bricks, painted render finishes and timber cladding. The 3-storey building to the north-west of Prince Regent House has employed white brick for the upper levels.



Figure 3: Mix of brown brick and rendered elevations of 2- and 3-storeys along St Giles Close

- 4.2.2 The rear elevations of late 18th, early 19th century (Grade II listed) and modern houses along Church Street enclose the northern side of St Giles Close. To a lesser extent the rear elevations of Listed Buildings along London Street can be appreciated in glimpsed views from St Giles Close.



Figure 4: Listed buildings along Church Street (left), Home Court (centre) and glimpsed views of rear elevations of buildings along London Street to the left of Prince Regent House

- 4.2.2 The structures along St Giles Close that are located to the rear of properties along London Street are a mix of single and 2-storey buildings. These are all of later 20th century date and employ brown bricks of similar character to the 1970s developments in St Giles Close. In contrast to this, the club to the south of Prince Regent House includes white painted render and brick on the road fronting elevation. These structures are generally of low architectural quality and do not contribute positively to the character of the conservation area or to the setting of the Listed Buildings along London Street. To a large extent they screen views towards the Listed Buildings along London Street.



Figure 5: Poor quality extensions to London Street properties with Prince Regent House at the centre of the image

4.3 Views

- 4.3.1 The Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal identifies an ‘important view’ from London Street looking along Church Street towards St Giles Church. This view includes listed buildings and ‘Buildings of Townscape Merit’ on the northern side of Church Street. A mix of historic houses (Grade II listed) and modern buildings on the southern side of Church Street, which are located outside of the conservation area, provide enclosure and terminate views to the south. Most notably, Home Court blocks views onto Prince Regent House from this aspect.



Figure 6: View Looking south towards St Giles Close from Church Street

- 4.3.2 Due to the presence of modern development along St Giles Close, including Prince Regent House, there is a very limited appreciation of the Listed Buildings along London Street. At best, the roofscape can be viewed on the approach to Prince Regent House along St Giles Close from the west.



Figure 7: View towards the Conservation Area (London Street) from St Giles Close

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Roof extension to Prince Regent House

- 5.1.1 In order to create an additional flat it is proposed to demolish the existing roof at Prince Regent House and construct a roof extension. As noted above, Prince Regent House dates from the early 1980s and is not considered to be of architectural or historical interest. The replacement roof would have a slightly higher ridge line. The increased height would not appear incongruous in the street scene. There are higher buildings in the adjacent area, most notably Home Court to the north and Nelson Mews to the south. Prince Regent House would remain subservient in scale to 108 London Street and the adjacent buildings along London Street. The half hipped form of the roof would reflect the hipped roofs of houses along

London Street. The introduction of dormers would also be in keeping with contemporary style new developments along St Giles Close, e.g. Nelson Mews.

- 5.1.2 Alterations to the long strips of window openings on the rear elevation would include some infilling to create smaller proportioned openings. This alteration would create window openings with vertical emphasis and with proportions that better reflect the design of the adjacent buildings. The existing porch would be removed and replaced with a less bulky flat roof canopy.
- 5.1.3 Proposed materials will include standing seam metal roof cladding and white brick infill to the existing window openings. The metal roof will clearly read as a contemporary material but will reflect the slate grey tones of some of the roofs on adjacent buildings. The use of white brick is a departure from the predominant use of brown and red/orange brick of adjacent buildings. However, the upper storey of Home Court does employ light coloured bricks. The colour tone would, however, be similar to the white painted brick and rendered finishes that characterise other buildings along St Giles Close.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Prince Regent House forms part of later 20th century developments which followed the demolition of the Reading Tin Factory in the late 1960s. This area is characterised by modern houses of varying design which reflect the prevailing forms of domestic architecture at the time they were built. This has resulted in a rather eclectic mix of scales, forms and use of materials. Overall, St Giles Close, including Prince Regent House, does not make a positive contribution to the setting or character and appearance of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area.
- 6.2 The proposed first floor extension and alterations to the front elevation of Prince Regent House are considered to be in keeping with the established scale, form and use of materials that characterise St Giles Close and built form to the rear of London Street. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would have a neutral impact on the setting and character of adjacent heritage assets.
- 6.3 As such, it is considered that the proposed roof extension and alterations to the front elevation of Prince Regent House would not have an adverse impact on the setting and therefore the significance of adjacent listed buildings or on the character and appearance of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area in accordance with paragraph 193 of the NPPF and the Reading Borough Local Plan Policy EN1.