



Town Planning Bureau

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Heritage Assessment

Site: Upper Floors of 1 to 15 Queen Victoria
Street & 148 Friar Street, Reading RG1 1SY
Application by: The Thackeray Estate
Lead Consultant: Mr Paul S Bottomley
Date: 25th January 2019.
Our Ref: URB-482-ST7a.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This heritage assessment is prepared by Town Planning Bureau and comprises supporting information in respect of a listed building (and planning) consent application for the works as described at para 1.2 below.

- Applicant: The Thackeray Estate (“the Applicant”).
- Site: Uppers of 1-15 Queen Victoria Street & 148 Friar Street, Reading, RG1 1SY (“the site”).
- LPA: Reading Borough Council (“the Council”).

Proposal

1.2 Listed Building consent is sought for the following works:

1. Works of repair and maintenance, and where necessary replacement of the roof with like for like materials.
2. Repair and maintenance of gables.
3. Repair and maintenance of brick work with localised repair to failed mortar joints.
4. Repair and maintenance to windows, and where necessary, replacement with like for like windows.

Background

1.3 The works described above are urgent works needed to make safe, repair and restore the building.

1.4 Pre-Application ref: 162021: External repairs and maintenance of listing building. Works to include overhaul defective roof coverings and associated works. Stabilisation and repair to gables and decorative terracotta. Repairs to masonry and pointing and timber. Repairs including window and redecoration. Issued 17th February 2017 and copy accompanies.

2.0 Site Location & Description

Site Location

- 2.1 The site, the subject of this application, is comprises the corner and part of a terrace of consistent buildings within Reading Town Centre in the northern section of the Primary Shopping Area. It is at the corner of Friar Street and Queen Victoria Street (“QVS”).

Site Description

- 2.2 The building is part of a large listing that comprises Queen Victoria Street and has its respective ends at Broad Street (southern end) and Friar Street (northern end). The site the subject of this application lies to the northern end.



Listing

2.3 The following is taken from the official listing for the site:

Grade: II

Entry: 1113564

Date listed: 14 December 1978

Amendment: 1 August 1979.

Statutory Address:

- 1-31 Queen Victoria Street
- 148, 149 & 150 Friar Street
- 2-32 Queen Victoria Street
- 24-28 Broad Street
- 35-39 Broad Street

Grid Reference: SE 71526 73571

QUEEN VICTORIA STREET 1. 5128 Nos 1 to 31 (odd) Nos 2 to 32 (even) SU 7173 NE 1/558 SU 7173 SW 2/558 SU 7173 SE 3/558 SU 7173 12/558 II 2. Including Nos 148 and 149 Friar Street and Nos 24 to 28 and 35 to 37 (consec) Broad Street. A circa 1894 commercial street with returns to Broad and Friar Streets. Probably by Joseph Morris. Dutch gabled free Baroque style. 3 1/2 storeys, yellow brick and terracotta with dividing Ionic pilasters. Dentil cornice. Pilasters to dormers, broken pediments above. An elongated pattern of shallow bays to 1st and 2nd floors 4:2:1:1:1:1:3. Mullion and transom window to bays, sashes with architraves (and pediments on 1st floor) to rest. Modern shopfronts, retaining cornice to fascia and scroll brackets to pilasters, only one shop retains prewar shopfront. Large returns to Broad Street. The return to east (No 28 Broad Street) supported by No 26 (dated 1894, grey brick with red terracotta dressings) and by No 24 (an early C20 Bank with -large shaped pediment doorway on corner to Cross Street; red brick with stone dressings and stone fret patterns to gables).

Current Uses

- 2.4 As part of a larger terrace built in the 1890s, it currently comprises retail accommodation arranged over the ground, basement and part of the first floors with the remaining 1st, 2nd and 3rd floors being office accommodation.
- 2.5 No. 148 Friar Street comprises retail floorspace at ground and first floor level (Café Nero) with office floors above. The building is located on the corner of Friar Street and Queen Victoria Street and is Grade II listed.

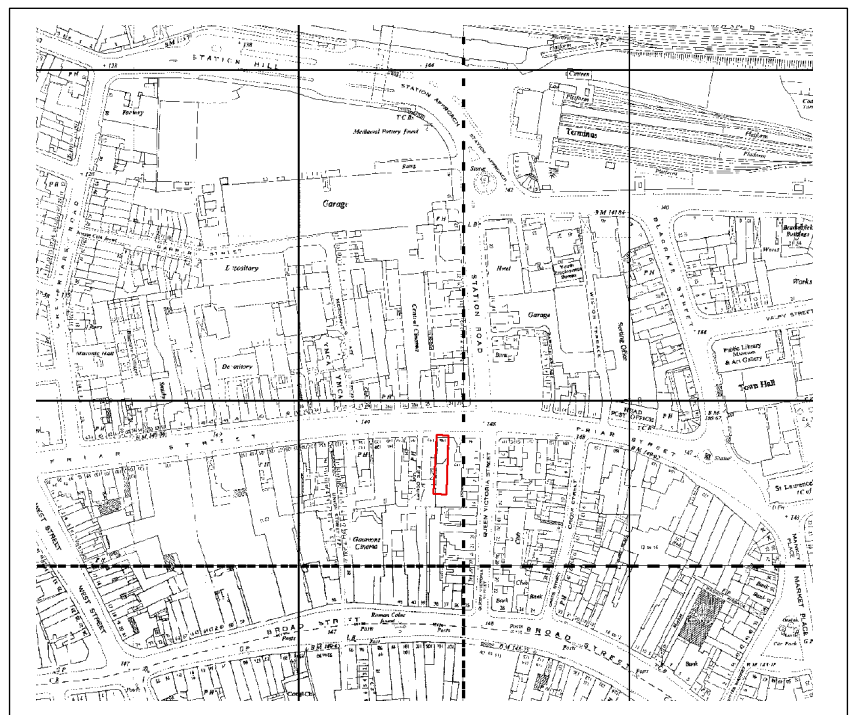
Conservation Areas

- 2.6 The site is not within a designated conservation area.
- 2.7 The earliest available mapping for Reading dates from the seventeenth century, as the town is covered within John Speed's 1611 survey (Figure 6), in which Friar Street is the northern-most street depicted, and presumably represented the edge of the settlement at this time.

- 2.8 Ordnance Survey mapping of Friar Street is available from 1879, and by this period the settlement has expanded further north, with the railway line and Reading station situated north of Friar Street, accessed by the newly created Station Road. In this edition of the mapping 146 Friar Street is legible as a discrete unit, having what appears to be a treed courtyard to the south, and with the Atheneum Club located to the east.
- 2.9 By the time of the 1912 edition of the mapping, Queen Victoria Street has been created, leading south from Friar Street to join Broad Street (Figure 14). The creation of the throughfare necessitates the demolition of much of the historic fabric in the vicinity, with a courtyard and associated buildings being demolished. The Atheneum club is relocated.



- 2.10 As stated above, again as a separate entity on the 1957 Ordnance Survey mapping, little changes with regard to its immediate environs on Friar Street for the following forty years. Mapping from 1993 and 1996, the last available Ordnance Survey mapping for the site at 1:2500 scale depicts it in just the same manner as the 1957 mapping.



3.0 Assessment of Significance

Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friar Street: Grade-II

- 3.1 No.148 Friar Street and nos. 1-15 Queen Victoria Street form part of a Grade II-listed range together with nos. 17-31 Queen Victoria Street to the south; nos. 2-32 opposite; 149-150 Friar Street to the northern end; and 24-28 and 35-38 Broad Street to the southern end. These were developed in circa. 1900-03 by the Borough of Reading on behalf of Councillor J.C. Fidler. The lead architect of the development is unclear as no original drawings appear to survive and the list description names Reading surveyor Joseph Morris as the most likely architect, but local architects S. Slingsby Stallwood and Charles Smith and Son are given credit by Pevsner.
- 3.2 The street was developed as an attractive thoroughfare linking Broad Street to Reading railway station. It comprises a terrace of single-bay buildings in yellow brick with elaborate terracotta dressings by S. and E. Collier, Ltd.
- 3.3 Both sides are four storeys with shopfronts at the ground floor and offices above, capped by Dutch and Flemish-style gables at the roofline. The frontages of no. 148 and 1-15 retain much of their original design and are of primary significance. The front elevations have a strong group value with the flanking terraces, and are integral to the composition of the street.
- 3.4 The upper floors are in a very bad state of repair and scaffolding is currently required to hold the gables to the roof. This is a result of original structural defects, as the gables were not given proper restraint and support. Several of the gables have already been lost, including the larger ones above 148 Friar Street and 1-3 Queen Victoria Street, replaced with plain triangular pediments that detract from the original design and appearance of the buildings and terrace as a whole.
- 3.5 Although the front elevations are of primary significance, they also include detracting elements, particularly on the ground floor. All of the original uniform shopfronts have been replaced with poor quality shopfronts in poor-quality materials and of different designs. The fascia's, hanging signs and lights at various heights creating visual clutter. The original double-height shopfront at 148 Friar Street has also been replaced with unsightly windows and timber panelling.
- 3.6 The rear elevations of the buildings are not publicly visible as they are landlocked by the buildings to the west of Friar Street and the south of Queen Victoria Street. Nos. 148 Friar Street and 1 Queen Victoria Street have no rear elevation as they abut the side of 147 Friar Street.
- 3.7 The rears of 3-13 are basic rudimentary design and have little architectural merit. There are blank brick elevations to (3, 7, 9 and 13) and recessed elevations (5 and 11) with paired windows. The rears have also been altered with new windows and a unsympathetic fire escape

walkway. In addition, all of the rear chimneystacks have been removed and the roofs altered with new skylights and vents.



Early 20th Century

- 3.8 Due to their poor-quality design and modern unsightly alterations, the rear elevations of nos. 1-13 are of low significance. The rear of no. 15, which is of a different design, displays more architectural merit with a balanced composition and attractive brick-faced dormer windows; it has also been little altered and is thus of moderate significance.
- 3.9 Internally, the buildings have also been heavily altered. No. 148 and 1-3 have been gutted on all floors and combined to form a single unit. All of the historic interiors including party walls, chimneybreasts and other features have been removed. However, the original window architraves (truncated by modern suspended ceilings) have been retained. The interiors are of no significance.
- 3.10 Similarly, 7-15 have also been connected on the upper floors and the retail units on the ground and first floors (13-15), have been combined into larger units with openings in the party walls and modern fit outs. On the upper floors, the majority of the original party walls and chimneybreasts survive, albeit with modern openings to link the buildings. Nevertheless, their original layout remains legible, and these aspects of the interiors are therefore of moderate significance. However, nearly all of the historic fixtures and fittings have been lost including the original staircases in all but the first-to-third-floor of No.9 - moderate significance. The

rest of the interiors are of no significance. No. 5 is the only building in the group to retain its original footprint as an individual building, and it also retains its original staircase, though the balustrade has been lost on the ground to first floor. Due to the legibility of the original plan form and the retention of more historic fabric, the upper floors No.5 are of moderate significance, however the ground-basement shop has a modern fit out = no significance. All the buildings have also suffered from extensive internal water leaks causing dry and wet rot in the upper floors, particularly in No.5. This is because the original downpipes were concealed in an inaccessible void between the front elevation and front-facing rooms, and as a result, they have not been able to be properly cleaned or repaired.

- 3.11 This special interest of the listed buildings is manifest in their fabric, which has the following hierarchy of significance:
- 3.12 Of **primary significance** and particularly sensitive to change is:
- The front elevations including brickwork, terracotta details, gables, granite pilasters and original windows to 1-15 Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friar Street;
- 3.13 Factors which **detract from the buildings' significance** and should therefore, wherever possible, be improved or removed are:
- The modern windows.
 - Elements of the building that are failing or are resulting in harm to the building. These include, leaks, missing brick work and mortar.

The Buildings Externally

- 3.14 The front elevations of 1-15 Queen Victoria Street face onto the north- west side of the street and form part of the contentious terrace, which is mirrored on the east side. The buildings are nearly all of a single bay and are of four storeys over basements, with elaborate yellow brick and terracotta facades designed in a free Baroque style. At ground floor level, all of the original uniform shopfronts have been replaced with modern shopfronts of varying styles between the original granite pilasters, terracotta cornices and brackets. These shopfronts, which are of a poor quality and have signs on the shop windows below the original fascia's, detract from the significance of the buildings. In addition, there is a modern entrance to the south of nos. 1-3, which is set back from the original building line.
- 3.15 On the upper floors, nos. 1-3 have a slightly wider frontage than the rest of the buildings in the range, which otherwise have a fairly repetitive composition composed of single bays of double-height bay windows or paired sash windows with terracotta architraves. Conversely, nos. 1-3 are of 5 bays, with three central double-height bay windows flanked by single bays of sash windows. The composition is otherwise as follows: no. 5 bay window, no. 7 paired windows, no. 9 bay window, no. 11 bay window, no. 13 paired windows and no. 15 bay window. Each bay is divided by double-height terracotta pilasters, with Doric pilasters to the first floor and Ionic pilasters to the second floor. The pilasters are of two varying designs, either fluted or enriched with terracotta carving. All of the windows on the upper floors appear to be the original one-over-over sash windows.
- 3.16 The bays with bay windows are composed of four-light terracotta mullion and transom sash windows (aside from those to nos. 1-3 which are three light), with a wide frieze between each floor and a deep dentil cornice at second floor. At third floor level, these bays are terminated with flat elevations with terracotta mullion and transom windows surmounted by tall scrolled gables with central projections adored with swags, and flanked with Corinthian pilasters. The bays with paired sash windows (aside from those to nos. 1-3 which have single windows) have pedimented terracotta architraves at first floor level, a string course between the first and second floor and plain terracotta architraves at second floor. At third floor level there are mullion and transom windows and scrolled gables, although these are smaller than the gables above the bay windows. The central gable above nos. 1-3, originally a much taller gable seen below, has been lost and replaced with a modern triangular brick pediment, which detracts from the original appearance of the building.

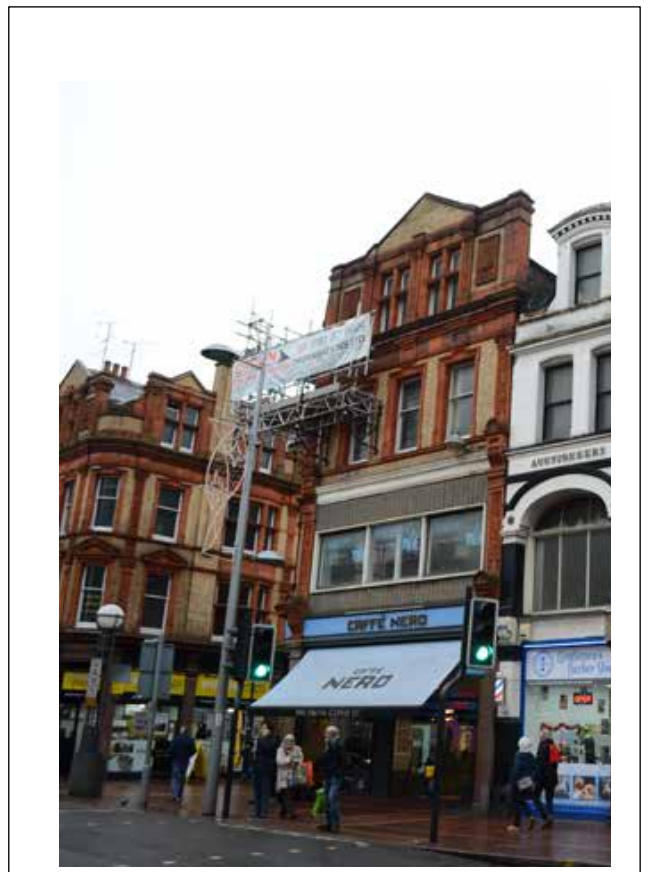
Side Elevation: No. 148 Friar Street

- 3.17 148 Friar Street is of a different composition to the main range. At the corner of the building, there is a curved frontage with a modern ground floor shop entrance and sign within the original fascia.
- 3.18 At first floor level there is a blind window with a terracotta architrave comprised of a blank apron and decorative pediment. Historic photographs suggest this was once used for shop

signage (see below). At second floor level there is a single sash window with a plain terracotta architrave and the scrolled ends of the flanking gables.



- 3.19 The façade facing onto Friar Street is of three bays. At ground and first floor level there was originally a double-height shopfront, which has been replaced at ground floor level with a modern shopfront around the original granite pilasters, and at first floor level with a detracting timber-boarded façade with three small windows. The original terracotta cornice has also been lost, though the flanking pilasters remain. The upper floors are of a similar design to 1-15, with three sash windows with plain terracotta architraves at second floor level, and paired terracotta mullion and transom windows at third floor level, which are flanked by Corinthian pilasters and carved terracotta panels. Further, the original gable has been replaced with a modern and detracting triangular brick pediment. On both the front and side elevations, the downpipes are concealed in a void between the elevations and the front-facing rooms.



Roofs

- 3.20 No.148 Friar Street and 1-3 Queen Victoria Street were constructed with a single roof structure comprising of a pitched, slated roof over the main range, radiating pitches supporting the front gables and a rear mansard clad with clay tiles. The roofs of 5-13 were also constructed with a single roof structure with a pitched, slated roof over the main range, radiating pitches supporting the front gables and three pitched and hipped roofs over the rear of 7-9 and 13. All of the roofs have been altered with modern rooflights and extract vents, while at the rear, all of the original chimneystacks have been demolished which suggests that the roofs have been altered internally, or at the very least re-slatted.
- 3.21 The roof of No.15 forms part of a separate range to the south which has a pitched, slated roof over the main range, radiating pitches supporting the front gables and a rear mansard clad with clay tiles. There are also two pitched-roofed dormer windows at the rear, with clay tiles to the sides.



4.0 Relevant Planning Policy

- 4.1 In preparing this application regard has been had to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Development Plan policies including the adopted Reading Core Strategy (Jan 2008, 2015), the adopted Sites and Detailed Policies Document (October 2012, 2015) and the adopted Reading Central Area Action Plan (Jan 2009).

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. Section 6 contains policies on delivering a wide choice of high quality homes.

Reading Core Strategy (Jan 2008, 2015)

- 4.3 The principal policies relevant include:
- Policy CS1: Sustainable construction and design
 - Policy CS7: Design and the public realm
 - Policy CS33: Protection and enhancement of the historic environment

Sites and Detailed Policies Document (October 2012, 2015) (SDPD)

- 4.4 The SDPD forms part of the adopted Development Plan, the principal policies relevant to this application include:-
- Policy DM1: Adaptation to climate change
 - Policy DM4: Safeguarding amenity.
 - Policy DM12: Access, traffic and highway related matters.

5.0 Considerations

5.1 These applications simply seek to repair the buildings that have been devoid of repairs for a number of years.

5.2 The works proposed are:-

- Overhaul of defective roof coverings and associated works
- Stabilisation and repair of unstable gables and associated terracotta
- Repairs to masonry and pointing
- Timber repairs to windows and redecoration

5.3 For a full analysis of the works, we refer readers to the accompanying documents:

- Windows Schedule (APP1).
- Outline Schedule of Works and Specification to Roof Repairs (APP2).
- Gable Repairs Method Statement (APP3).
- Capital Stone Method Statement (APP4).
- Capital Stone Drawings (APP5).
- Pre-Application Reponse (APP6).

Heritage Assessment

5.4 The **NPPF (para.189)** states in determining applications, the Applicant should describe the significance of any heritage assets affected and there, if 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.

5.5 For note, this scheme is simply to repair a building that is unsafe, dangerous and needs urgent attention, the works will, when complete, not change the what is on site, more they will enhance by safeguarding the future of the building and the valuable contribution it makes to this part of Reading Town Centre.

5.6 At **para.192** it states that LPAs, when determining applications, should take account of the 'desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets'.

5.7 Core Strategy **Policy CS33** states that 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.

- 5.8 As advised, there is no change to the design or appearance of the building, more simply the works will sustain the heritage assets and by repairing, they will enhance the significance of the asset.
- 5.9 These works are essential for the future survival of the buildings, which have remained unrepaired for a number of years, which is self-evident by the structural supports that have had to be installed. Accordingly, the principle of repairing the building is essential and therefore acceptable.

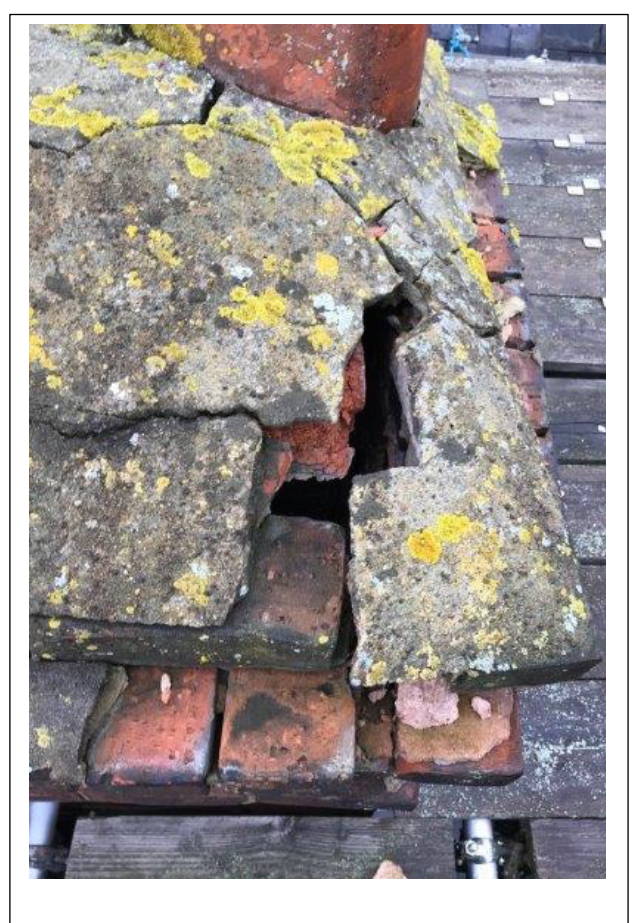
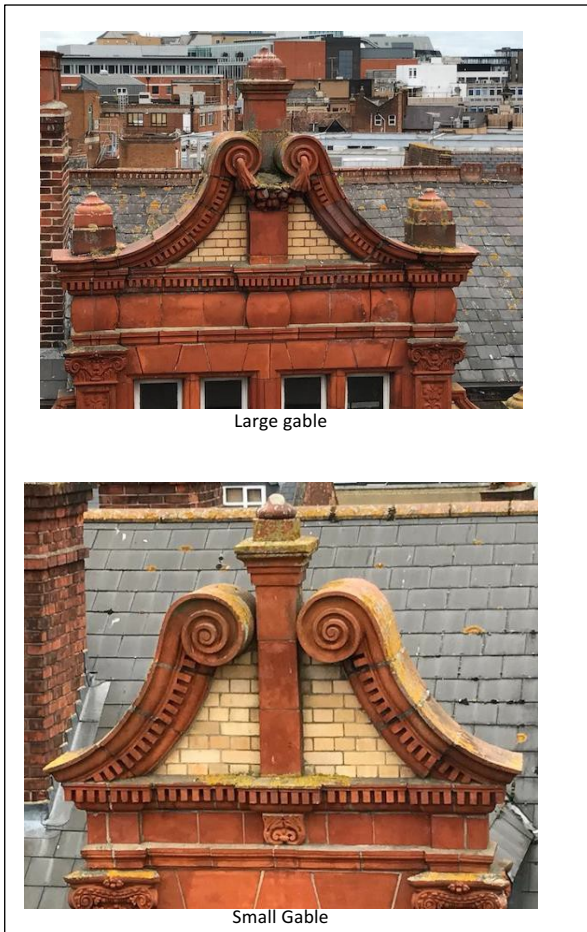
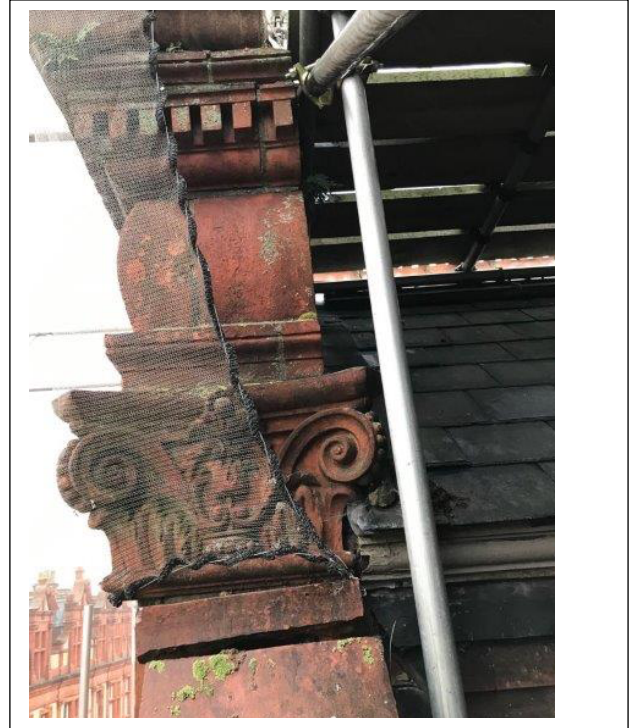


Materials

- 5.10 Where materials have failed, there will be a requirement to replace these, however, these would be with like-for-like, ie of the same material, appearance and colour. Although there would be loss of original fabric, the said items have failed, are dangerous and will eventually no longer form part of the building. Accordingly, their replacement is essential and a public benefit.

Gable Repair

- 5.11 For a full précis of the gable works we refer to the Method Statements. Again, the gables are currently held in place by scaffolding, and are unsafe. The works will repair, restore and preserve the gables. As such, the heritage benefits are significant.



Roof Repairs

- 5.12 We again refer readers to the detailed roof repairs schedule of works. Where possible, all salvable slates will be retailed on site. Where new slates are required, they will be of the same widths, sizes and thicknesses as those they replace, therefore, when replacing the roof slates they will be sited in the corresponding position. All other works of repair will use matching materials, unless, for example a poor repair has been completed with the wrong type of material, the correct will be used - this is particularly relevant to lead work as the Applicant will use the historically appropriate materials such as lead.
- 5.13 Therefore, again, the roof will safeguard the future of the building and this is a positive public benefit.

Windows

- 5.14 These will be repaired, it is not anticipated any windows will need replacing. They will be just repaired and this again is a public benefit.

Sustainable design and construction

- 5.15 **Policy CS1** states that proposals for refurbishment of existing building stock, will be acceptable where the design of buildings and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change.

Pre-Application Response

- 5.16 We refer to pre-app ref: 162021/PREAPP, Officers confirm listed building consent is required for the works, which this application seeks. Officer state:
- *The Council's Historic Buildings Consultant has viewed the documentation submitted and is content that, subject to a method statement demonstrating appropriate techniques, methodology and use of materials in the context of the significant grade II listed buildings, the nature of the repair works proposed with this pre application enquiry would serve to preserve the historic character of the listed building (in line with Policy CS33 of the Core Strategy 2008, 2015).*
- 5.17 Accordingly, the pre-app concludes that the works are likely to be supported by officers.

6.0 Summary and Conclusions

- 6.1 In conclusion, the works are essential to the preservation of the building and the works of repair, restoration and improvement are a significant benefit to the building.
- 6.2 Without these works, the building will fall in to further disrepair, will further decay and become further unsafe. These works are therefore essential.
- 6.3 The applications are accompanied by detailed method statements that detail the works.
- 6.4 The works will repair and enhance the existing building, without making any material changes to appearance.
- 6.5 The proposal is therefore submitted in full compliance with the NPPF and the relevant development plan policies and guidance.
- 6.6 The policy presumption is in favour of the grant of listed building consent and there are no material considerations that outweigh that presumption.

