



Built Heritage Statement

17 - 27 Queen Victoria Street, Reading - Work to Gables

October 2019



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Prepared by:	Emma Baxter
Checked by:	Simon Roper-Pressdee
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1. Introduction



- 1.1. Background
- 1.2. The Site and Surroundings
- 1.3. Identified Heritage Assets
- 1.4. Development Proposals
- 1.5. References

1.1. Background

This Built Heritage Statement ('report') has been prepared by WYG on behalf of IDream to ascertain the built heritage sensitivities of 17 - 27 Queen Victoria Street, Reading, Listed Grade II (the 'Site') (Figure 1.1) in relation to structural remediation works proposed for the gables to the asset.

Other documents have been referred to in the writing of this report and should also form important background reading for the report. These include (but not exclusively) the list descriptions for nearby listed buildings, and both national and local government policy and guidance.

All drawings and photographs used in this report are for indicative purposes only and are not to be referred to for technical detail. Reference should be made to the accompanying plans submitted as part of the planning application.

1.2. The Site

The Site is centred at approximately SO71512 73527. It is sited near the centre of Reading (Figures 1, 2 and 3), and as will be discussed later on, forms one part of a wider set of buildings, all (unusually) included in one listing. As such, this report will consider the Site in its own right, whilst recognising that it forms an integral part of the listed buildings of Queen Victoria Street. The surroundings are heavily urban in character, with Friar Street sitting directly to the north, and Broad Street to the south.

1.3. Identified Heritage Assets

There is a requirement under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for an applicant of development proposals to ascertain what constitutes the 'significance' of any heritage assets identified, what potential effects the development proposals will have on that heritage asset's significance, and how such effects would be mitigated.

The level of detail provided should be proportionate to the importance of each heritage asset, and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact that may arise from the development proposals.

Approval for the conversion of 17 - 27 Queen Victoria Street was given in line with drawings submitted with the planning and listed building consent application. In the drawings reference was made - in descriptive terms - to the repair and remediation of the gables, but no specifics in relation to the practical achievement of this were submitted at the time.

Following approval, the contractor prepared a survey condition report in relation to the application of a structural remediation system (Thor Helical), which was submitted, together with a statement of justification in heritage terms, for consideration by the LPA. Following this, a separate Listed Building Consent is sought for the works, and this report forms part of the application in line with local government policy.



Figure 1.1: Site Location



Plate 1.1: The Site, viewed from Broad Street to the south

1.4. Development Proposals

In short, the proposals are for the structural pinning and stitching elements of the repair work to the gables.

1.5. References

Accordingly, this report has referenced the relevant legislation, and planning policy and guidance at national and local levels, with special regard to the historic environment (Appendix 1).

To ascertain what constitutes the Site's significance the 'heritage values' outlined in *Conservation Principles, Policies, and Guidance* (English Heritage, April 2008) have been applied as part of this assessment.

The findings of this report are based on a detailed understanding of the Site and its surroundings through research, an on-site visit from accessible locations undertaken in September 2019, and the application of professional judgement.

2. Legislation, Planning Policy, and Planning Guidance



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- 2.1. Overview of the Decision-making Planning Process
- 2.2. Legislation
- 2.3. Planning Policy
- 2.4. Local Planning Policy
- 2.5. Methodology for Assessment

2.1. Overview of the decision-making process

The decision-making process for planning applications is within the role of the Local Planning Authority (LPA), and in certain cases the Secretary of State, which will have consideration of relevant legislation and planning policy at both national and local level. As such, this section will examine the relevant legislation and planning policies and guidance in relation to the Site’s development proposals. Further detail in relation to legislation and policy is outlined in Appendix B.

The current regime recognises that planning applications should consider the potential impact of development proposals on heritage assets. This term includes: designated heritage assets, which have a statutory designation (e.g. Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) and non-designated heritage assets, typically compiled into a Local List by LPAs.

2.2. Legislation

Legislation regarding Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the 1990 Act).

Section 16 of the 1990 Act states that, in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works, the LPA shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the Listed Building, or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Section 66(1) states that, in considering whether to grant planning permission for development that affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority (LPA) or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

The meaning and effect of these duties have been considered by the courts in recent cases, including the Court of Appeal decision in relation to Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Ltd v East Northamptonshire District Council [2014] EWCA civ 137.

The Court agreed with the High Court’s judgment that Parliament’s intention in enacting Section 66(1) was that decision-makers should give “considerable importance and weight” to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings.

The Court of Appeal Judgment of Mordue v South Northamptonshire Council [2015] EWBC 539 (Admin) in examining the compliance of the approach for decision-making set out in the NPPF with the requirements set out in the 1990 Act, found that “a decision-maker who works through those paragraphs [NPPF paragraphs 192-196, previously paragraphs 131-134] in accordance with their terms will have complied with the Section 66(1) duty”. Thus, the approach set out in the NPPF for assessment and decision-making relating to heritage assets complies with the special regard for the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting. It can be assumed that these tests also comply with the requirements set out in Section 72(1) of the 1990 Act, relating to the special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or

enhancing the character and appearance of a Conservation Area.

2.3. National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published 27 March 2012 and revised in July 2018, February 2019 and June 2019 sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

When determining Planning Applications, the NPPF directs LPAs to apply the approach of presumption in favour of sustainable development, which is expected to run through the plan-making and decision-taking activities. However, it should be noted that this is expected to apply except where this conflicts with other policies contained within the NPPF, inclusive of those covering the protection of designated heritage assets, as set out in paragraph 11 of the NPPF.

In Section 12 ‘Achieving Well-designed Places’, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Paragraph 127 states that local planning policies should aim to ensure that development proposals function well, respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.

NPPF Paragraphs 184-202 relate to the conservation of the historic environment. These paragraphs set out an approach for decision-making, considering the harm to a heritage asset’s significance, the extent of such harm, and, in the case of designated heritage assets, the need to weigh harm against public benefit. NPPF Paragraph 189 outlines the requirement for applicants to proportionately describe the significance of an identified heritage asset, including any contribution made by their setting, to understand the potential impact that development proposals will have upon that significance.

2.4. Local Planning Policy

Reading Borough Council are currently preparing a new Local Plan, which has been through examination and has been found sound. It is expected that the new plan will be adopted in November 2019. Therefore, whilst the Policies within the adopted Core Strategy remain as material considerations within the planning process, the emerging policy will supersede them when adopted, and is at the current time essentially afforded full weight. Policy within the emerging local plan relevant to the application is:

EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

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

- Listed Buildings;

- Conservation Areas;

- Scheduled Monuments;

- Historic parks and gardens; and

- Other features with local or national significance, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and assets on the Local List.

All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. 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, usually in the form of public benefits.

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 and other heritage assets at risk through neglect, decay or other threats, pro-actively 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.

Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect or of damage to a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

The single policy that is considered relevant to this report contained within adopted policy states :

Policy CS33: Protections 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.

2.5. Methodology for Assessment

The following assessment is in accordance with Historic England’s *Good Practice Advice Note 3 (GPA 3): The setting of Heritage Assets (2nd Edition), 2017*. The 5-step process set out in GPA 3 requires an analysis of a heritage asset’s ‘setting’, and the degree to which the setting contributes to that heritage asset’s ‘significance’. It also requires an assessment of how such a contribution, if any, may be altered by development proposals. The contribution can be positive, negative or neutral. In order to inform the Setting Assessment, a proportionately-detailed assessment has been undertaken to fully understand the significance of the identified heritage assets.

Identifying the elements that constitute a heritage asset’s significance is outlined in English Heritage’s (now Historic England’s) *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (2008)*: Evidential, Historic (illustrative or associative), Aesthetic and Communal. Since its adoption, this document has been widely used by heritage professionals to establish the significance of heritage assets, connecting between their physical fabric and respective settings.

The *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* document is currently being updated to set out Historic England’s approach to conservation in a format that is more concise, and aligns with the language of the NPPF and relevant legislation. This is to be achieved by recasting the understanding of significance to focus on the ‘Heritage Interest’ (Historical, Architectural, Archaeological and Artistic), whilst retaining reference to the four heritage values presented in the original document. Once adopted, the new document will form the primary guidance for assessing what constitutes a heritage asset’s significance.

Both the NPPF *Glossary* and the *British Standard Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings (BS 7913:2013)* separately describe the term ‘significance’. The former states that the ‘heritage interest’ of a heritage asset derives from its archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interests, with the latter citing a wide variety of attributes that may contribute to heritage interest. These are, however, largely in accordance with those set out in Historic England’s established heritage values, albeit more prescriptive.

Therefore, for the sake of clarity, these documents each provide their own description of what constitutes significance, but as they are all in accordance with each other, the established heritage values set out in *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* are used herein until an update of the Historic England guidance document has been adopted.

This Heritage Assessment follows the 5-step process set out in Historic England’s *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017, 2nd Edition) (GPA3)* in order to assess the potential impact

of proposed development on the setting and significance of the heritage assets identified. Where relevant, additional resources, such as Supplementary Planning Guidance, are utilised as part of the appraisal.

Step 1: Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected

A search of the Historic Environment Record (HER), together with the National Heritage List (NHL) and the Council’s website provides an initial list of potential heritage assets to be considered, including listed buildings, conservation areas, and other national or local heritage designations which may need to be considered. This is augmented with a site visit and additional research, where other buildings and structures not included in any of the above, but potentially considered as non-designated heritage assets, can be identified. Each heritage asset is visited, as far as public access allows, and its surroundings are examined in order to understand the degree to which elements of the surroundings allow for the building to be experienced or better understood, therefore identifying its setting, as defined within the NPPF.

Step 2: Assess the degree to which these settings and views make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s) or allow their significance to be appreciated

In order to undertake this stage, the significance of the heritage assets has to be understood, whether designated or non-designated. Although there is no prescriptive method for assessing significance, this Appraisal utilises the heritage values set out in *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* (English Heritage, 2008), and considers each heritage asset against these values (evidential value, historical value, aesthetic value and communal value). Whilst the British Standard suggests a variety of additional potential values, the ones set out by in *Conservation Principles* are generally recognised as appropriate and proportionate values to assess. Once each heritage asset has been assessed against the five heritage values, and its significance is understood, an assessment of the contribution of setting to this significance can be undertaken. This is achieved through assessing each element of setting against the heritage values of the asset, and identifying whether it a positive, negative or neutral contribution, if any—and if so, identifying which heritage values it contributes to and how. The final stage is to identify the relative extent of significance arising from setting, in comparison to other sources of heritage value.

Step 3: Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on the significance or on the ability to appreciate it

GPA 3 sets out suggested, although non-exhaustive, potential attributes of a development which may affect the setting of heritage assets, which include location and siting of the development; the form and appearance of the development; other effects such as planting, lighting, noise, change to general character, and changes to skylines or built surroundings and spaces; permanence of the development; and

longer term or consequential effects of the development. These are used as a guide and a basis from which to assess how a development may alter a particular element of setting, and to understand which heritage values the proposed development may impact upon. Details of the design of the proposed development supplied are as outlined at Section 3 of this report. Where harm is identified to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the nature of harm is explained, and the extent of harm to significance is set out in terms of substantial harm, or in degrees of less than substantial harm, as appropriate. Where harm is identified to the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, the nature of harm is set out in terms of high, moderate, low or negligible. This is in recognition that the NPPF differentiates the extent of weight to be afforded to the conservation of a heritage asset, dependant on its status of designation. Where benefit is identified, this is identified in terms of substantial, moderate, low or negligible, for the purpose of clarity.

Step 4: Explore the way to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm

Although this step generally relates to identification and assessment of potential impact during design, and the subsequent mitigating harm through re-design, for the purposes of this assessment, this step will be used to identify areas of where there is heritage benefit within the scheme, and/or elements of mitigation integral to the design (for instance, landscaping, or repairs to a listed building). In order to be able to undertake a quantitative balancing exercise between heritage benefit and heritage harm in the next step, benefit is referred to in terms of substantial, moderate, low or negligible.

Step 5: Make and document the decision and monitor the outcomes

As this final stage is explicitly for the decision-maker, this step is not undertaken within this assessment. However, as any decision will be based on the compliance of the proposed scheme with legislation and policy at both national and local level, this step is used to assess whether the scheme is in line with the requirements stemming from such. A synopsis of the identified impacts on each heritage asset is provided, followed by an assessment of cumulative harm on the surrounding historic built environment. Where both heritage harm and heritage benefits are identified, a balancing exercise of these is undertaken. Finally, the assessment will identify whether the proposed scheme is compliant with relevant legislation and policy, and whether any additional balancing of harm against public benefit is required. This final step will take account of all relevant and up-to-date case-law as it pertains to the scheme, as well as the planning history of the site where relevant, including (but not exclusively) any previous applications, appeals, together with any formal or informal pre-application advice from both the Local Planning Authority and from Historic England.

3. Historic Background and Map Regression



- 3.1. Historic Background
- 3.2. Historic Map Regression

3.1. Historic Background

The first mention of Reading is in AD871 within the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, with the Saxon settlement *Reada ingas*. Its early history was dominated by the invading Danes, who captured the settlement at the end of the Ninth century, although they appear to have razed the settlement in c.1006. It is mentioned in the Domesday book as being held by the King, rather than an overlord. From the outset, the settlement was recognised as a strategic settlement, being positioned on the route between London and settlements in the south-west such as Bath and Bristol. A timber fort is known to have been present during the early years following the Norman Invasion, although this was later replaced by a motte and bailey castle in c.1140—however, this was subsequently demolished in 1152-1153. An abbey was also built by Henry 1, between 1121 and 1125, following which the Abbot became the landowner of Reading and its surroundings.

The principal industry of Reading during the Medieval period was centred on cloth and wool, with evidence of watermills around the area. Other industries, such as boat building, leather and gold-smithing, are also noted in the area, helping to identify Reading as a focal settlement for the region. The moving of the county gaol from Wallingford to Reading during the fourteenth century further helps show the growing importance of the town during this period.

The Reformation, as with many parts of the country, saw a drastic alteration in the running of the town, with the closure of the Abbey in 1538-40 together with the Grey Friars and the St John the Baptist Hospital. The Abbot was hanged outside the Abbey gates for continuing to refute Henry VIII's claims to the leadership and head of the Church. Soon after the closure of the Abbey, the town was granted independence, with the formation of a town council and the right to elect a mayor.

The seventeenth century saw the local wool and cloth industry suffer, in particular from competition both from the continent, as well as from areas of England such as the Cotswolds. By the eighteenth century, the collapse of the wool and cloth trade was complete, and was no longer a major industry in the town, although the increase in other industries, such as pin-making nail-making and gun-smithing ensured that the industrial heart of the town continued. Other industries, such as brick and tile -making helped to allow Reading to continue as the principal town in Berkshire.

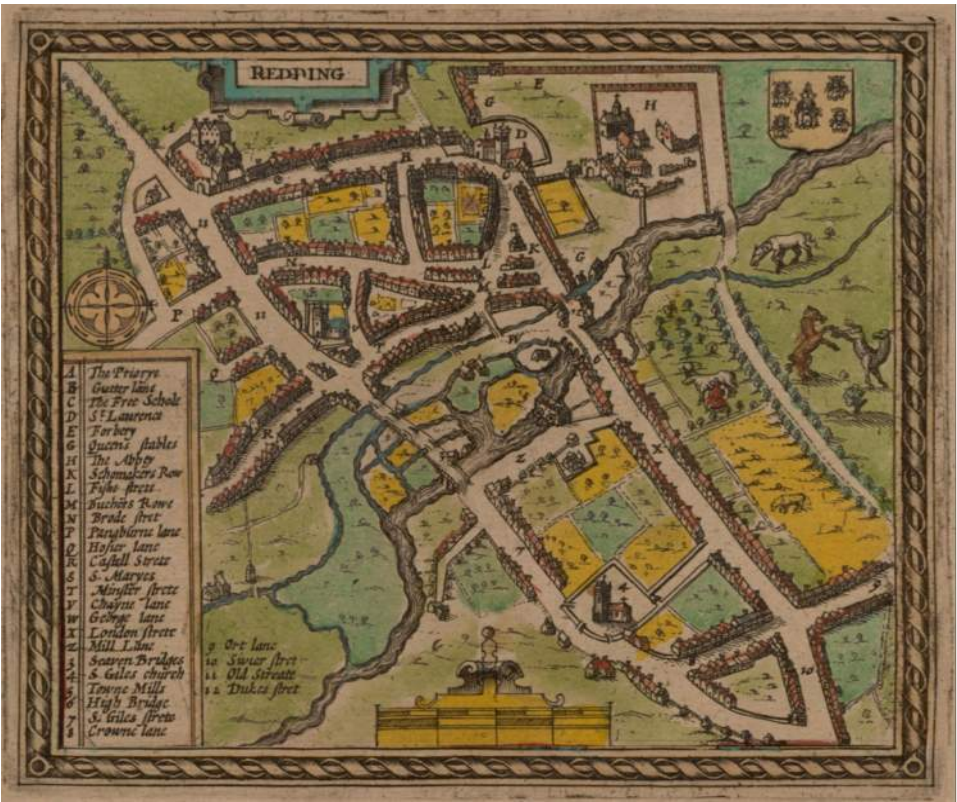
The Civil Wars, between 1642 and 1651, saw a division in loyalties between the Royalists and the Parliamentarians, a situation common in many parts of the country. Whilst in the first months of the First Civil War, Reading was occupied by the Parliamentary troops, the Royalist army overthrew the Parliamentarians without a fight, following which fortifications were built around the town, and over three thousand troops were stationed in and around Reading. By 1643, the Royalist army abandoned Reading as it was too far behind enemy lines to hold and Reading remained in Parliamentary hands until the end of the war in 1646.

1688 saw the deposing of James II who fled abroad. Parliament invited William of

Orange to replace him, who marched inland to Newbury. However, Irish troops loyal to James II remained stationed in Reading, and helped to secure the throne for Mary II, who was made Queen in 1689.

In common with many areas of the country, the eighteenth century saw much of Reading rebuilt and redesigned. The national concern over public hygiene also saw other improvements in Reading at this time, including the creation of the Improvement Commissioners. This period saw the rapid expansion of Reading, and together with the development of the canal system, such as Brindley's Grand Cross, and more locally the opening of the Kennet and Avon canal in 1810, the industry of Reading was again secured. The development of the railways, and their rapid replacement of the canal system c. 1840, saw Reading being linked directly with London, with travel times and costs, both for the public and for industry, considerably reduced.

The nineteenth and twentieth century, as with much of the country, has seen considerable expansion of the town, partially as a result of an increasing population, but also in part due to other factors, including the continuing development of the University, and the proximity of the town to the capital city.



3.0.1. Plate 1: Early photograph of Queen Victoria Street c.1901



3.0.2. Plate 2: Photograph of Queen Victoria Street, 1973

3.2. Map Regression



Figure 3.1: Ordnance Survey, 1879 (1:2,500)



Figure 3.3: Ordnance Survey, 1912 (1:2,500)

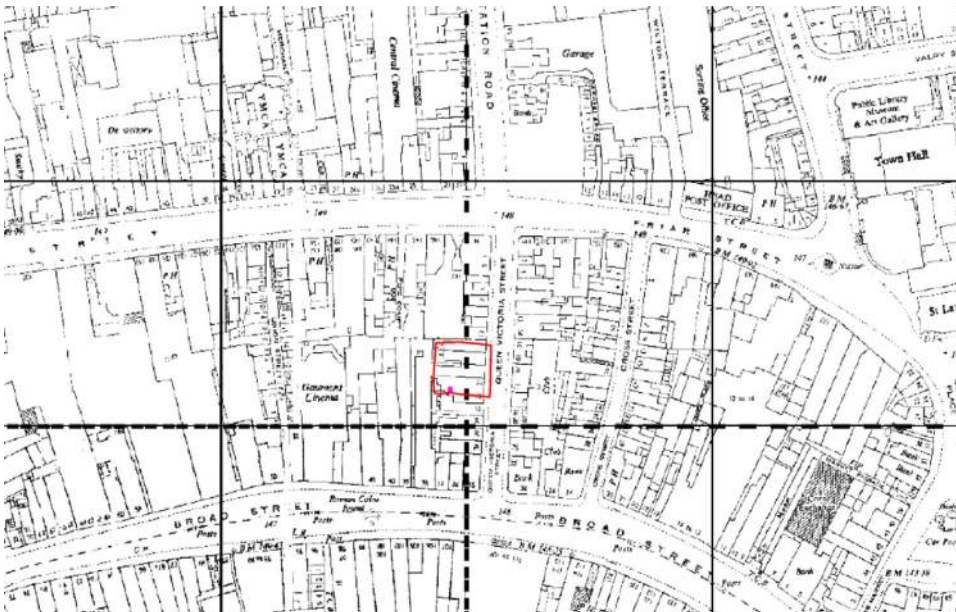


Figure 3.5 Ordnance Survey 1957 (1:2,500)

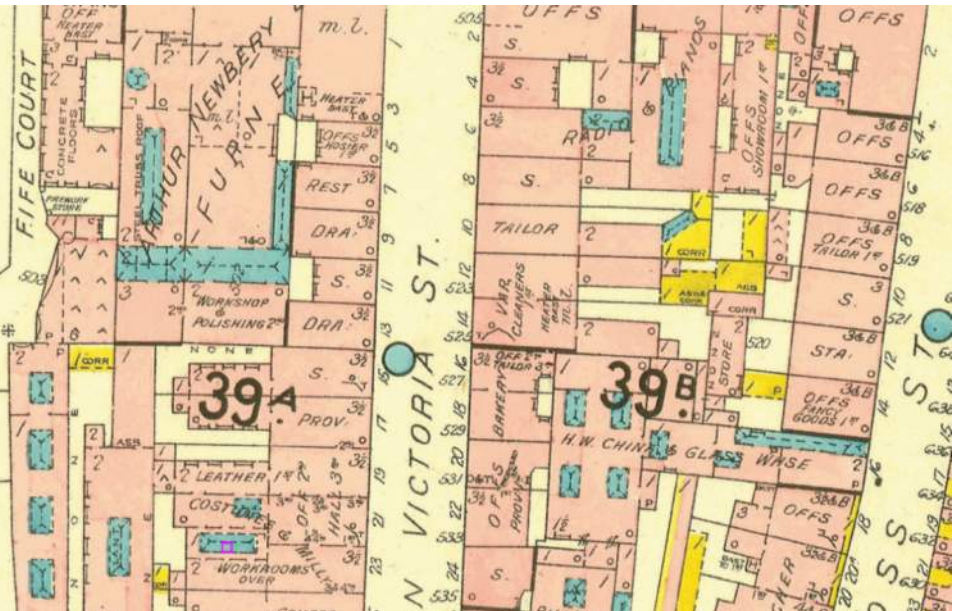


Figure 3.2: Extract from Goads Insurance Plan, 1897

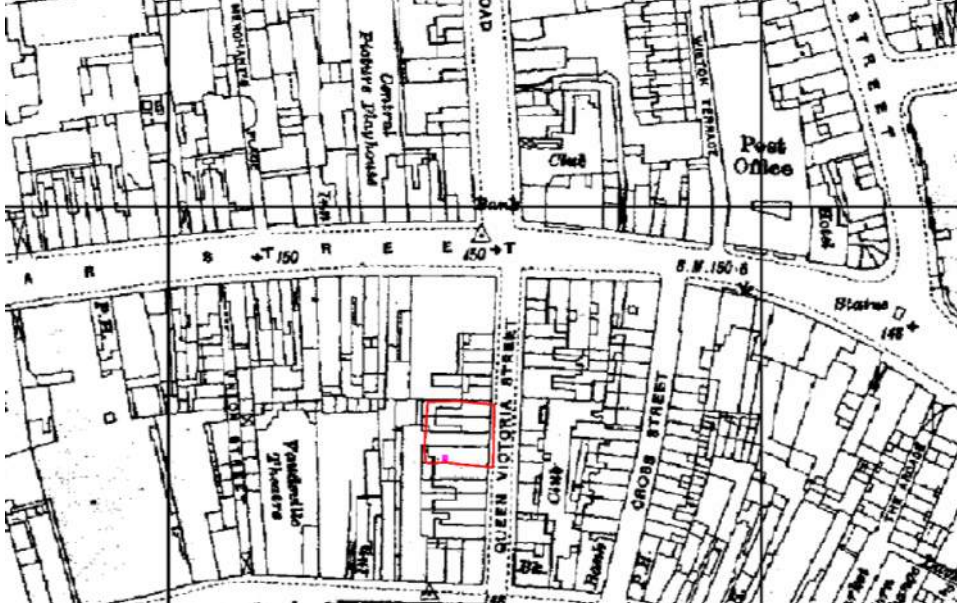


Figure 3.4: Ordnance Survey 1931 (1:2,500)



Figure 3.6: Ordnance Survey, 1993 (1: 2,500)

4. Assessment of Significance



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- 4.1. The Site: Introduction and Description
 - 4.2. Significance

4.1. The Site: Introduction and Description

The listed building consists of a set of buildings built in c.1894 and designed by Joseph Morris (the Berkshire County architect between 1872 and 1905). It is likely that the scheme was probably in response to the late nineteenth-century rejuvenation of the city centre. The buildings were designed to combine retail units, workshops and residences to provide for the various cottage industries developing within the area.

The Site consists of a section of Queen Victoria Street, the whole of which is listed under one citation, recognising the value of the set of buildings forming both the southern and northern sides of the street. (Plate 2). It is clear from satellite imagery that other areas of the listed building have been substantially altered, in particular to the rear elevations and to the upper floors, with various sections of the building having been subject to differing treatments, due to historic ownerships and varying levels of occupancy.

Externally, the two buildings rise over four storeys, and sit over twenty-two bays forming both the eastern and western elevations of Queen Victoria Street, and turn each corner to Friar Street and Broad Street. Modern shop-fronts are present along the whole road. At both first and second floor, the windows are pairs of stone-mullioned bay windows separated by a third bay containing a pair of sash windows (pedimented to the first floor), of which the Site occupies two sets of such bays on the western side of the street. The third floor is set within the attic space, with ornate Dutch gables containing windows for each bay. However, the units directly to the south of the Site have been recently altered, to include the removal of the original first floor windows, and their replacement with stark white shop-windows. The elevations are dressed in buff brickwork and deep red terracotta detailing.

The rear elevation presents a more utilitarian elevation than that of the front. Faced in plain brickwork with simple brick arches for window openings, and simple Dutch gables at attic level, the rear elevation also has a series of two-storey rear wings, with courtyards in between and access to the rear. The roofs are generally pitched and covered in slate. To the rear of these lies the brick and steel wall for the WH Smith extension, which is attached to the listed building at Broad Street and forms the dominating backdrop for the rest of the listed building along the western side of the road.

Whilst the main blocks to the rear are predominantly pitched, areas of the courtyards have been roofed over, resulting in flat roofs joining the rear wings at ground floor. This infilling has also resulted in a reconfiguration of elements such as soil & vent pipes and rainwater goods, with these now spread across the rear elevations and across windows. Furthermore, in particular at ground floor level, there have been several window blocked up, and other elements such as air-conditioning units and flues have been placed haphazardly across the rear elevations.

Internally, although the internal spaces have been heavily modified, amalgamating

the units into two properties, the Site still retains much of the simplicity of the historic planform, which together with the presence of other internal features, allows the historic layout to be still largely legible. The front rooms at first floor were clearly the main domestic living room, facing the street, and each lit with large windows, and often with details such as decorative fire surrounds and hearths, deep skirting-boards, dado rails and coving. However, in some rooms, the party wall adjacent to the fireplace has been pierced, allowing direct access through to the adjacent property and room, and in others, the rear walls have been moved, and stud partitions sub-divide the rooms.

To the rear of these front rooms, are the hallways and staircases to second floor, although half of these have been removed—those that remain retain their turned balusters and timber handrails and newel posts, and often the tongue-and-groove boarding to their sides. Internal windows are largely present throughout, allowing borrowed light to the staircases. In some areas, the wall between the front room and the staircase has either been completely removed, or removed and replaced with modern stud partitions. The rear domestic rooms have also had a variety of treatments, with some retaining their features, and others either amalgamated into the front room through complete loss of walls, or have been subject to sub-division into smaller rooms, and doorways blocked up.

Suspended ceilings are present, although the original ceilings appear to be retained above. Door-frames and doors throughout the Site are a mix of historic, detailed frames and panelled doors, with the majority having been replaced with modern fire-doors and self-closers.

The rear wings, similarly, have been subject to differing degrees of alteration. Whilst there is generally a step down from the main residential area of the buildings, into a small hallway, with stairs leading back down to ground floor, as with other elements, only about half of these remain. The rear workshop rooms similarly vary in their completeness, with some having all partitions removed, and the spaces converted into either spacious offices/ meeting rooms, or into small offices/ work spaces.

At the time of the site visit in September, the asset was encased in scaffolding, including a crash deck to prevent injury from falling masonry. The scaffolding allowed detailed inspection of the gables element of the asset which hitherto was not possible.

4.2. The Site: Gabling - Detailed Description

The Dutch gables to the roof of the asset reflect the rhythm of the projecting window bays below to the first and second floors. Where a bay window is located the corresponding gable above has six lights to its fenestration, and where no bay exists the gable has four lights. The rhythm of the bays and gables along the length of the facade is not regular, although the constituent units are, which creates a somewhat modular character to the composition of the building.

The two types of gable are almost identical in their component parts, construction and detailing, comprising a mullioned and transomed window with ovolo section flanked by Corinthian pilasters on pedestals, which supports a frieze and entablature which breaks forward over each pilaster and centrally over a keyed detail, and has a dentillated cornice. Above the cornice the pediment is also dentillated, scrolled to the top and broken to allow the partial orb finial, carried on a pier to rise through. Some, although not all, of the larger 6-light gables have an additional swag detail to the pier shaft between the scrolls of the flanking broken pediment. These more elaborately detailed gables also have ornamental panelling to the shafts of the pilasters, further orb finials to the shoulders of the gable scrolls and flanking curved brick wall sections with moulded coping, panelled sections and partial orb finials.

The condition of the gable fabric is unstable in numerous places, and that this has been an on-going issue is evidenced by the remedial repair work that has already been undertaken to the rear of the gables, and to areas of pointing to the gable frontages. The mortar repairs that have been undertaken are not sympathetic to the historic fabric, and from the presence of further cracking and shifting of mortared joints, appear insufficient to maintain the stability of the fabric presently.

Issues of concern in relation to the fabric of the gables include areas of spalling brickwork and terracotta, joint erosion and water ingress, plant growth, the lifting of coping materials and areas of detached terracotta detailing, (see illustrations overleaf).

4.3. Significance

This section initially assesses the significance of the listed building as a whole, considering both sides of the street as one list entry, although a full assessment and analysis of each element of the building was not possible, due to access restrictions and differing ownerships. This is followed by a more detailed assessment of the Site, and its contribution to the overall significance of the listed building.

1-31 Queen Victoria Street

As already discussed, the listed building was built in c.1894 and was designed by Joseph Morris, in his capacity as the Berkshire County architect between 1872 and 1905.

The set of buildings covered by the single listing citation has considerable external aesthetic values, in particular through the use of Baroque design and style, and the use of contrasting materials, such as buff brickwork and red terracotta detailing. The aesthetic impact of these front elevations is considerably strengthened by the uniformity of the elevation, although this impact is heavily marred by the first floor architecture on the south-western section of the building, where large plate-glass windows are present, as opposed to the rhythmic terracotta bays. At ground floor, whilst continuing in retail use throughout the street, there are few historic shop-fronts, retaining all their original detailing, still present, with the majority having been subject to some degree of replacement or alteration—however, this concentration

of retail units at ground floor level retains the general aesthetic character of the street, and of the buildings as a whole.

The rear of the listed building could not be inspected to any degree, due to ownership and access issues, but examining aerial photography it is clear that the buildings on both sides of the street have been subject to a variety of different treatments, with extensions, demolition, and considerable alteration. Whilst these elevations would have most likely been inferior in quality and detail to that of the front, due to the degree of alterations visible from aerial photography, it is clear there is little historic aesthetic value retained in the rear elevations. However, the rears of the Site were inspected, and these can be seen as having some degree of aesthetic and illustrative value, through their simplicity reflecting both the lack of importance afforded visually to the rear elevation, and the semi-industrial nature of the rear wings, which were intended to house workshops for the local “cottage” industries.

There is a considerable degree of historic value remaining within the listed building: it assists in illustrating the development and growth of eighteenth century industry within the local area, and the implications of such development on town planning, in particular considering the already relatively heavily-developed urban environment, and the combination of retail units, workshops and residences, providing for the various cottage-industries developing within the surrounding area. There is also some degree of associative value through the designs of Joseph Morris. However, as Morris is not recognised as being important beyond a regional level, and then only through his being the County architect, such values are limited in their contribution to the overall significance of the listed building.

There is some communal value in the buildings, in particular through their creation of an architecturally-unified shopping street, although this has little input to the overall heritage significance of the listed building.

17-27 Queen Victoria Street

As part of the listed building, the Site continues to make a contribution to the aesthetic values of the listed building, in particular through its continuation of the Baroque design, and the terracotta and buff brickwork to the front elevation.

The rear elevation, again, makes a contribution to the overall significance of the listed building, through the relative intact simplicity of the elevation, and the presence of the rear wings, which, externally at least, have changed little. This aspect of the Site, however, is dominated by the steel shed built for WH Smiths, which has a considerable negative visual and dominating impact on the listed building. As many of these rear wings throughout the listed building appear to have been substantially altered or in some cases removed, the existing rear wings of the Site can be seen as having some degree of historic and aesthetic value.

Internally, the heritage values of the Site have suffered from a variety of different changes, some of which have already been mentioned. For example, the removal or replacement of partitions walls, and the knocking-through of what would have been party walls between individual properties, to create larger and more integrated spaces within the Site, has largely removed the experience of small, integrated workshop-cum-residence principal of the original design of the buildings. Whilst

architectural details remain throughout the Site, such as stair-cases and fireplaces, many of these have previously been removed, which together with the alterations to the spatial layout of the Site, has resulted in a deterioration of the contribution of the Site to the overall significance of the listed building.

There are also different degrees of retention of internal historic fabric and character throughout the Site, with some areas largely retaining their spaces unaltered (and with coving, dado rails and fireplaces still in place), whilst other areas have been subject to considerable alteration, with the introduction of suspended ceilings, the removal of fire surrounds, and the insertion of new partitions to create new spaces. This has led to a reduction in the degree to which the historic character and usage of the buildings, as individual properties and workshops, can be experienced, although the general character of the Site, as a mix of residential (albeit at the lower end of quality accommodation) and retail, is largely retained.

In terms of the contribution of the Site to the overall significance of the listed building, it is unclear how the internal spaces compare with other parts of the listed building, but the rear elevations make a minimal contribution, whilst the front elevations continue to make the dominant contribution to such significance.

The specific contribution of the Gables

It has been noted above that the principal frontage of the asset (and that part formed by Nos 17 - 27) makes an important contribution to the aesthetic (or artistic and architectural) value of the asset. In terms of how the asset is experienced within the wider townscape, the gables have a strong visual impact when viewed from Broad Street, and lead the eye further along and down the building facade, a direction of gaze which is reinforced by the verticality of the double height pairings of bay windows. The subtleties and variations of the architectural details to the gables are more difficult to appreciate from ground level, but the opulent character of the design is certainly appreciable and the dominant form of the gables and their emphasis through repetition both evidence this.



Plate 4.2 Rear of No 12 Gable showing the degree of masonry repair



Plate 4.4 Rear of No 15 Gable showing separation of coping from brickwork, mortar deterioration and efflorescence and lichen on bricks



Plate 4.6 Rear of Gable No 17 illustrating presence of vegetation within mortar joints and efflorescence and lichen to brick surfaces



Plate 4.3 Front of Gable at No 17 showing missing elements of corncicing



Plate 4.5 Front elevation of Gable at No 21 showing spalling to brickwork



Plate 4.7 View of Gable frontages from within Queen Victoria Street

5. Assessment of Impact



5.1. Development Proposals

5.2. Impact on Identified Heritage Assets

5.1. Proposals for the Structural Remediation of the gables

The proposals for structural remediation of the gables are as understood from Volute London's report and technical information provided by Thor Helical on crack stitching and heavy duty masonry pinning (Nov 2016). In compiling this section of the report reference has been had to a number of publications from Historic England with regard to best practice in structural repairs, including Conservation Bulletin 69 and the Earth, Brick and Tile volume of the Practical Conservation series.

5.2. Impact of proposals on the significance of 17 - 27 Queen Victoria Street

The gables to 17 – 27 Queen Victoria Square have clearly had previous structural intervention to counteract the failing brick and terracotta, as can be seen from the masonry application to the rear of the gables. Re-application of a similar but more comprehensive masonry remediation strategy would require the dismantling of the gables and their reconstruction, which not only runs the risk of further damage to the weakened material and potential loss of fabric, but also weakens the authenticity of the construction and harms the historic illustrative value. These important considerations aside, the reconstruction of the gables in this manner would also generate a significant financial burden both in terms of materials and timescales that could detrimentally impact the viability of the current scheme and result in cessation of development, leaving the heritage asset in an increasingly vulnerable position.

Advice and guidance from Historic England advocates the employment, where possible, of reversible strategies in relation to building conservation. It is recognised, however, that in terms of masonry structural issues this ideal is rarely, if ever, achievable. Building materials have a natural life span which is often considerably shortened by failure to undertake on-going maintenance, particularly with regard to rainwater goods. The ingress of water causes many issues, including the effluence of salts within brick and terracotta, spalling of material from repeated freeze-thaw action, the establishment of vegetation matter whose roots are damaging to mortar joints and masonry, and also the rusting of iron ties within the fabric. Identification of, and repairs to, sources of water ingress are fundamental to stabilising the condition of the fabric going forward.

In terms of damage already inflicted to the historic fabric of 17 - 27 Queen Victoria Street, the relative youth of the building material in terms of the development of remediation technology means that the long term effects of many treatments to seal spalled material are not understood, although some positive results have been

achieved with the application of sealants. The commissioning of bespoke terracotta pieces to replace missing sections is a further avenue which can be taken in sensitive restoration, although this too has financial considerations implicit, as well as issues in relation to the authenticity of the material repair.

The dressing of decorative elements however, is only one aspect of the works required at 17 - 27 Queen Victoria Street, with the greater concern relating to the overall stability of the gable structures themselves. Historic England recommend the tying in of unstable masonry with stainless-steel dowels with a roughened profile to increase the level of grip through the historic fabric, therefore requiring a smaller cross section and less removal of historic material.

The proposed pinning and stitching systems developed by Thor Helical utilise these parameters and have successfully been employed in heritage contexts to stabilise failing masonry. The contractor has provided a schematic showing the proposed degree of pinning, which is caveated by variance in installation. To comply with heritage policy and guidance it is recommended that any intervention is kept to the minimum possible to secure the fabric.

Whilst the works are being undertaken to secure failing masonry and imminent structural failure, their prophylactic use in application to the remaining gables in advance of further structural defects is also proposed. This element of the works advances the scope beyond the minimum necessary but will safeguard the remainder of the fabric which evidentially is likely to fail over time in the same manner as that which already has.

The retention of the original gable fabric and its securing physically has very positive outcomes with regard to the architectural and artistic elements of the asset's value, which are considered to more than outweigh the minimal loss of historic material and consequent impact on historic illustrative value. On balance, therefore, it is considered that the proposals preserve the significance of the heritage asset.

6. Summary of Findings



6.1. Heritage Assets

6.2. Conclusions

6.1. Heritage Assets

This assessment has identified that the proposed development will preserve the significance of 17 - 27 Queen Victoria Street, and the wider designated terrace of which it is part.

The assessment has identified the heritage values which make up the significance of the asset. It has then assessed the nature and scale of impact arising from the proposed works on the significance of the designated heritage asset.

In short, the significance of the Grade II listed terrace is assessed as deriving from its historic and architectural special interest, which encompasses artistic value in addition to illustrative and architectural value. On balance it has been found that securing the architectural and artistic value inherent in the gables' appearance outweighs the degree of harm to illustrative value occasioned by the works, and the significance of the asset is preserved.

6.2. Conclusions

The proposals have been demonstrated to occasion no harm to the significance of any identified heritage asset and are therefore compliant with legislation and national and local government policy. There are therefore no heritage grounds on which this proposal should be refused.

7. Bibliography



7.1. Sources

7.1. Sources

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8. Appendices



A. Statutory List Description

B. Legislation, National, Strategic & Local Planning Policies and Guidance

A. Statutory List Descriptions (National Heritage List for England)

35-38, BROAD STREET, 24-28, BROAD STREET, 2-32, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET, 148,149 AND 150, FRIAR STREET, 1-31, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET

Reference Number: 1113564

Grade: II

Date first listed: 14-Dec-1978

Details:

QUEEN VICTORIA STREET 1. 5128Nos 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 4:2:1:1:1:3. 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).



B. Legislation, National, Strategic and Local Planning Policy and Guidance

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended)

Where any development may have a direct or indirect effect on designated heritage assets, there is a legislative framework to ensure the proposals are considered with due regard for their impact on the historic environment.

Primary legislation under Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the Local Planning Authority or Secretary of State, as relevant, shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

As stated in Section 69 of the Act, a conservation area (CA) is an “area of special architectural or historic interest the character and the appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance”. It is the duty of local authorities to designate such areas, and to use their legal powers to safeguard and enhance the special qualities of these areas within the framework of controlled and positive management of change. Further to this, Section 72 of the 1990 Act states that in exercising all planning functions, Local Planning Authorities must have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing conservation areas.

The meaning and effect of these duties have been considered by the courts in recent cases, including the Court of Appeal decision in relation to Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Ltd v East Northamptonshire District Council [2014] EWCA civ 137.

The Court agreed with the High Court’s judgment that Parliament’s intention in enacting Section 66(1) was that decision-makers should give “considerable importance and weight” to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings.

National Planning Policy

iii. The current policy regime identifies, through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), that applicants should consider the potential impact of development on Heritage Assets. This term includes both designated heritage assets, which possess a statutory designation (for example listed buildings, conservation areas, and registered parks and gardens), as well as undesignated heritage assets.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Revised June 2019)

iv. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published 27th March 2012, and revised in July 2018, February and June 2019, sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

v. When determining Planning Applications the NPPF directs LPAs to apply the approach of presumption in favour of sustainable development; a presumption which is expected to run through the plan-making and decision-taking activities. However, it should be noted that this presumption is expected to apply except where it conflicts with other policies contained within the NPPF, inclusive of those covering the protection of designated heritage assets, as set out in paragraph 11 of the NPPF.

vi. Section 12 of the NPPF, ‘Achieving Well-designed Places’ (Paragraphs 124 to 132), 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 area in which it is built; establish a strong sense of place; and respond to local character and history, by reflecting the built identity of the surrounding area.

vii. Section 16, ‘Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment’ (Paragraphs 184-202), relates to developments that have an effect upon the historic environment. This is the guidance to which local authorities need to refer when setting out a strategy in their Local Plans for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. This should be a positive strategy and should include heritage assets which are most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. It is also noted that heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. For clarification, the NPPF provides definitions of terms relating to the historic environment. For the purposes of this report, the following are important to note:

- Heritage asset: This is a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. These include designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority; and
- Significance: The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. This interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.

viii. The NPPF advises local authorities to take into account the following points when drawing up strategies for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, and when determining planning applications:

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

ix. Paragraph 189 of the NPPF states that LPAs, when determining applications for development, should require applicants to describe the significance of the heritage assets affected and the contribution made by their setting. Adding that 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.

x. According to Paragraph 190, LPAs should also identify and assess the significance of a heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal and should take this assessment into account when considering the impact upon the heritage asset.

xi. Paragraphs 193 to 197 consider the impact of a proposed development upon the significance of a heritage asset. Paragraph 193 emphasises that when a new development is proposed, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation and that the more important the asset, the greater this weight should be. It is noted within this paragraph that significance can be harmed or lost through the alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or by development within its setting.

xii. The NPPF, therefore, continues the philosophy of that was upheld in PPS5 in moving away from narrow or prescriptive attitudes towards development within the historic environment, towards intelligent, imaginative and sustainable approaches to managing change. English Heritage characterised this new approach, now reflected in the NPPF, as ‘constructive conservation’. This is 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, English Heritage, 2009).

National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) 2019

xiii. Guidance has been adopted and recently revised in order to support the NPPF. This does not supersede PPS 5: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide (DCLG, DCMS, English Heritage, 2010). It reiterates that conservation of heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance is a core planning principle. It also states, conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change, requiring a flexible and thoughtful approach. Furthermore, it highlights that neglect and decay of heritage assets is best addressed through ensuring they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation. Importantly, the guidance states that if complete, or partial loss of a heritage asset is justified, the aim should then be to capture and record the evidence of the asset’s significance, and make the interpretation publicly available. Key elements of the guidance relate to assessing harm. It states, an important consideration should be whether the proposed works adversely affect a key element of the heritage asset’s special architectural or historic interest. Adding, it is the degree of harm, rather than the scale of development that is to be assessed. The level of ‘substantial harm’ is stated to be a high bar, that may not arise in many cases. Essentially, whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision taker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the NPPF.



Conservation Principles, Policies, and Guidance (English Heritage, April 2008)

This document outlines Historic England’s approach to the sustainable management of the historic environment. While primarily intended to ensure consistency in their own advice and guidance through the planning process, the document is commended to LPAs to ensure that all decisions about change affecting the historic environment are informed and sustainable. This document was published in line with the philosophy of PPS5, yet remains relevant with the NPPF and PPG, the emphasis placed upon the importance of understanding significance to properly assess the effects of change to heritage assets. Guidance within the document describes a range of ‘heritage values’ that constitute a heritage asset’s significance to be established systematically; the four main heritage values include: aesthetic, evidential, communal or historical. The document emphasises that:

‘considered change offers the potential to enhance and add value to places... it is the means by which each generation aspires to enrich the historic environment’ (Paragraph 25).

Local Planning Policy

Reading Borough Council are currently preparing a new Local Plan, which has been through examination and has been found sound. It is expected that the new plan will be adopted in November 2019. Therefore, whilst the Policies within the adopted Core Strategy remain as material considerations within the planning process, the emerging policy will supersede them when adopted, and is at the current time essentially afforded full weight. Policy within the emerging local plan relevant to the application is:

EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

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

- Listed Buildings;
- Conservation Areas;
- Scheduled Monuments;
- Historic parks and gardens; and
- Other features with local or national significance, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and assets on the Local List.

All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. 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, usually in the form of public benefits.

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 and other heritage assets at risk through neglect, decay or other threats, pro-actively 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.

Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect or of damage to a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

The single policy that is considered relevant to this report contained within adopted policy states :

Policy CS33: Protections 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.

If you would like any more information
please visit www.wyg.com or contact:

Birmingham

54 Hagley Road,
Edgbaston,
Birmingham
B16 8PE

