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Heritage Significance

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Introduction

0.0 Introduction to the Heritage Impact Assessment

- 0.1 This document forms the supporting information for a Listed Building Application for works which will convert 73 London Street, which is Listed Grade II*, from offices to flats.
- 0.2 A planning application will be required for the conversion, as Permitted Development Rights for this change of use do not apply to Listed Buildings.
- 0.3 The purpose of the Application will be to propose conversion back to residential use can take place while preserving the building's heritage significance.
- 0.4 The purpose of this statement is firstly to find where this heritage significance resides, so that it can be preserved.
- 0.5 The second purpose of this statement is to explain our conservation strategy and why we believe it will allow us to convert the building without harming it.
- 0.6 As we anticipated at pre-application stage, the Council's heritage officer visited the building and advised on improvements to this strategy. Heritage Officer's recommendations from pre-application/visit fully have been implemented in the new floor plan layouts.

Assessment of Heritage Significance

1.0 Physical Context

- 1.1 No. 73 is on the east side of London Street, which leads south from the Cornmarket. It is a fairly steep street, rising up from the River Kennet. It is wide – over 20 metres between house fronts.
- 1.2 London Street is already shown on Speed's map of 1611. The site of No. 73 is shown in red, north of the junction with Church Street.



Speed's Map, North Up

- 1.3 This map is not particularly accurate, but it does suggest that the house fronts were much narrower at that time. They are shown with private gardens at the rear, and then open fields (a pig is shown) as far as the avenue, which seems to represent Watlington Street, since the bridge is shown on the far side of the abbey ruins. This then was the context before the house was built.
- 1.4 We know that No. 73 and No. 75 were built in 1748. At that time, they would have been the most substantial houses in the street. Subsequent houses built in the street may well have copied some of their features, as well as the mix of professional and residential use, so that No. 73 could be said to have set the tone for what London Street was to become, to have made its own, new, context.



Front (London St) Elevation

- 1.5 Dr Addington is quoted as saying that he "... had patients in a house built at Reading for five years antecedent to the year 1754 [when he went to London, and] ...built a house contiguous to my own for the reception of such patients." This house was presumably No. 75 and the house he lived in with his family is presumably No. 73. Both houses are in the restrained Georgian taste, faced in soft orange brick with stone dressings and porches.
- 1.6 In Coates's map (below) from 1810, the house seems quite different, as it has many more outhouses at the back.



- 1.7 The house to the left of No. 73 is much chopped about. It was formerly connected to No. 73.
- 1.8 The houses to the right of No. 75 have facades that echo No. 73. This may be a mark of respect. Although Dr Addington left Reading in 1754, the connection with this distinguished doctor was well known in the following century, as his son became the Prime Minister Viscount Sidmouth.
- 1.9 By 1840 the streets have their modern pattern (below):



- 1.10 In contrast to the front, the back of the building is much altered.



- 1.11 The window pattern is definitely much altered and the shadow on the outshot to the right shows where part of the building was removed and a fire escape added in the early 2000s.
- 1.12 It is doubtful whether either the octagonal bay or the central one with the Venetian window are original as they are built in a smoother, more purple brick than the rest of the back. The windows with concrete lintels are not in the original positions – the flat arch of one of the original windows is still visible between the top two windows in the detail below:



- 1.13 This carpark is shared by the offices in No. 73 and the modern flats, which are out of shot to the right.
- 1.14 No. 75 was converted to a cinema in the twentieth century and this can be seen to the left.
- 1.15 There is little context here to preserve, but this gives scope for improvement.

2 Historical Context

- 2.1 The listing description makes clear that it is the historical associations of the house are a key factor in its heritage value:

LONDON STREET

1.

5128

(East Side)

Nos 73 and 75

SU 7173 SE 3/195 22.3.75.

II* GV

2.

1748, house of Dr Addington, physician to George III, father of the later Prime Minister. (Lead rainwater head with initials AM and date 1748 removed since previous list). An imposing pair of houses of the same general design. 3 storeys and basement.

Stucco plinth, red brick, header bond. Painted stone string at 1st floor level, and painted stone cills to 1st and 2nd floor windows. Moulded and painted stone cornice, plain brick parapet with stone coping. Old tile roof, taller hipped part to left with shaped chimney.

Glazing bar sash windows (No. 75 has a vent now to 2nd floor left hand window), scalloped blind boxes to No. 75.

Central doors with stone steps (only No. 73 retaining moulded nosing). No. 73 has 6-panelled door with radiating fanlight over deep plain painted wood architrave with ovolo moulding. Moulded open pediment on half scroll fluted brackets with acanthus ornament, repeated at right angles on wall face. No. 75 has double 6-panelled door with rectangular fanlight (oval and star glazing pattern); wood case with panelled reveals, architrave surround, plain frieze, moulded cornice and half scroll fluted brackets with acanthus ornament. Recently a further door has been inserted to left of No. 75, smaller with isolated brackets (probably intended for a flat hood). C18 or early C19 ramped spearhead cast-iron railings with panel standards topped with small urns and segmental bar and ball across front of both houses. No. 73 retains a pair of sphinx footscrapers. Interior of No. 75 altered to an evens venue. No. 73 has original staircase with fluted balusters and plaster panelling in principal rooms, hall and staircase. Flagged hall with black diamond corners. Rear altered.

Listing NGR: SU7185373036

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| <p>2.2 Doctor Anthony Addington was born in 1713 in Twyford, and after qualifying MD at Trinity College Oxford set up practice in Reading, marrying Mary Hiley, the daughter of the Headmaster of Reading School. The patients he treated in this house from 1748-54 were private mental patients, but when he returned from London in 1774, he “treated the poor without fee” according to a display inside the building.</p> <p>2.3 Unlike (for example) Sir John Soane, he was proud of his connection with Reading, and was influential in the establishment of the Royal Berkshire Hospital on land that he and his son family donated.</p> <p>2.4 During his period in this house Dr Addington published a paper, which correctly proposed chlorinating water on ships to keep it fresh but wrongly suggested that this would cure scurvy.</p> <p>2.5 Dr Addington was a Tory and friend of the Pitt family. When George III became mentally ill it was he who the Prince of Wales called upon to give a prognosis for his father’s mental health.</p> <p>2.6 Dr Addington was therefore in good favour with both the King and his Prime Minister, William Pitt the younger, and when these two became irreconcilable, his son was a compromise candidate to replace Pitt.</p> <p>2.7 His son Henry was not born in the house, but was sent to Reading School, and became Prime Minister in 1801. He seems to have been the Neville Chamberlain of his time, making peace with Napoleon on any terms, and building Martello towers as a defence against invasion.</p> <p>2.8 Henry’s subsequent tenure as Home Secretary during the Peterloo Massacre doesn’t sound happy to us today, but at the time Reading society would have been proud of this association with a true pillar of society, now known as Viscount Sidmouth, who lived in Bulmershe Court.</p> <p>2.9 73 London Street therefore stands as a symbol of a time when Reading was still a small town, but felt itself at the centre of British Public life.</p> | <p>2.10 Much of this historical background comes from a series of boards displayed in the offices. It is proposed that these or something similar continues to be displayed in the building after conversion.</p> <p>3.0 Planning Context</p> <p>3.1 The stair and opening linking the building at first floor level to No.71 was removed in 2000 (App No 991342) and the rear return was cut back to its present line; the fire escape was added at much the same time.</p> <p>3.2 Following water damage, repairs were made to floors and internal rainwater pipes renewed in 2001 (App No 990692). A commemorative blue plaque to Dr Addington was added in 2010.</p> <p>3.3 Reading’s SDPD states at 9.1.9 that “national planning policy provides an appropriate framework for considering proposals”. This document fulfils the requirements of paragraph 128 of the NPPF.</p> <p>3.4 Policy CS33 States (11.9) that “The character and integrity of Listed Buildings shall be preserved” and this statement sets out to prove that this can be done in this case.</p> <p>3.5 London Street forms part of the London Street/Market Place Conservation Area, designated in 1972 and extended in 1982. The appraisal mentions “Good examples of prestigious Georgian town houses in London Street” as a feature of special interest.</p> <p>4.0 Statement of Significance</p> <p>4.1 Cultural Significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations.</p> <p>4.2 Cultural significance is embodied in the <i>place</i>, its <i>fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places and related objects</i>.</p> <p>4.3 The significance of place is very important in this case. The place concerned being London Street, and the run of Georgian houses referred to by Nikolaus Pevsner as the best in the street, illustrated on Page 4 of this statement. No change whatsoever is proposed to the London Street elevation.</p> |
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| <p>4.5 The fabric of the building is not all of equal significance. Apart from the public face onto London Street, the building has a fine hall and stair. As the listing description has it: “No. 73 has original staircase with fluted balusters and plaster panelling in principal rooms, hall and staircase. Flagged hall with black diamond corners.” These features need to be carefully preserved in any conversion.</p> <p>4.6 Much less visible from the street, but still of significance, is what the listing describes as “Old tile roof, taller hipped part to left with shaped chimney.” On the other hand, the same listing description simply states “back altered” and some alteration may be reasonable here without affecting any features of significance.</p> <p>4.8 The significance of its setting lies in the relation with buildings with which it is terraced and its relation to the street. Both will be unchanged.</p> <p>4.9 In terms of its use, this has always been described as a house. To that extent, its use as an office may be more of an aberration than its return to residential use as flats. And its very significant associations with Dr Addington will remain, as will the plaque and display boards telling its story.</p> | <p>5.3 The impact on the hall and stair is kept to an absolute minimum. Where rooms have original plasterwork, partitions and fitted furniture are kept clear of cornices and mouldings or taken along lines where partitions were run in the past. The heads of any new openings are kept below the bottom of cornices.</p> <p>5.4 The upper floors have already been much altered, but changes here are still kept to a minimum. The small side stair that gives access to the top floor is retained, for example.</p> <p>5.5 A similar approach has been taken to vertical shafts and pipework routes – they are either taken through existing holes or new holes are made where it can be done with least damage and reversibly.</p> <p>5.6 The cellar is in good condition and will continue to be used for storage.</p> |
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6 Setting of Listed Buildings - Impact

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| <p>6.1 There will be no adverse impact on the setting of adjacent listed buildings or the Conservation Area.</p> <p>6.2 No additional parking is proposed. The designated spaces for the existing office, which are at the back, are adequate for this town centre location.</p> |
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Assessment of Impact

5 Use - Impact

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| <p>5.1 It is impossible to make an eighteenth century building into dwellings suitable for twenty-first century use without some change. Just as the building needed its chimneys then, it needs boiler flues and soil vent pipes now.</p> <p>5.2 Great care has been taken to minimise this impact on the significant fabric. All external flues and vents are either on the back, which is already altered beyond recognition, or are taken through the soles of valley gutters, hidden by parapets and with no damage to the old tiles. Absolutely nothing will be taken through the front.</p> |
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7 Proposed Changes - Impact

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| <p>7.1 Sound conservation principles are to minimise changes to the historic fabric. Where changes are necessary in order to make the building suitable for use as flats, these have been balanced against positive interventions or the removal of previous inappropriate changes.</p> <p>7.2 There will inevitably be some impact, but this will be mitigated as much as possible, where this is compatible with the requirement to produce viable accommodation.</p> <p>7.3 We do not propose to make changes to the original brick external wall fabric. Due to the limited size of each floor plan it would not be feasible to add internal insulation throughout, particularly since this may have an adverse impact on the drying out of solid brick walls.</p> <p>7.4 Holes for vents and flues will be made at the back but these will avoid brick arches.</p> |
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- 7.5 No works other than lead collars around pipes are proposed to the roof, and this will be hidden from view.
- 7.6 Existing sliding sash windows are to be retained to front and back. Twentieth century windows to the back will be replaced however.

- 10.5 Some new openings in walls and floors are required in order to allow the plans to work but these have been kept to a minimum size and number.

11 Justification against Policy

- 11.1 Reading's SDPD states at 9.1.9 that "national planning policy provides an appropriate framework for considering proposals". This document fulfils the requirements of paragraph 128 of the NPPF.
- 11.2 The NPPF states that the Heritage Statement should cover 'no more than is sufficient'. We trust that the information provided in this document is 'proportionate' to the relatively minor level of intervention on the original fabric.
- 11.3 Policy CS33 States (11.9) that "The character and integrity of Listed Buildings shall be preserved" and this statement shows this to be the case.
- 11.4 The original garden does not survive. No changes are proposed.
- 11.5 There will be a net increase in dwelling units.
- 11.6 The interventions set out in this document are sensitive to the heritage significance of the building. On balance, the interventions are beneficial to the character of the listed building and enhance its heritage value.

Justification for Proposal

8 Use - Justification

- 8.1 The proposed change of use can be made without damage to anything of heritage significance.
- 8.2 A completely different approach is proposed from the way that offices which are not covered by legislation are now being converted into flats under permitted development rights.
- 8.3 The proposal would safeguard the building for future generations in a way that would preserve and enhance the listed building, the setting of adjoining listed buildings and the Conservation Area.

9 Proposed Changes - Justification

- 9.1 Some unsympathetic recent additions will be removed both internally and at the back.
- 9.2 Good maintenance will be part of the proposal.
- 9.3 Initially underfloor heating was proposed, as this option may not be suitable, we anticipate to have ordinary radiators for the new flats.

10 Proposed Changes - Mitigation

- 10.1 The proposed plans show that changes are kept to a minimum, and any external changes are at the back.
- 10.2 No irreversible damage will be done to any original internal features.
- 10.3 The hall and stair will still be the same spaces as they originally were, with no alteration being necessary.
- 10.4 By dealing with issues of acoustic and fire separation in a zone on top of the existing floor, the existing floors can be kept essentially unaltered.