

FISHERMAN'S COTTAGE INN, KENNETSIDE, READING RG1 3HG

Heritage Assessment



FORUM
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Heritage Statement

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Fisherman's Cottage Inn is a Grade II listed building located to the east of Reading city centre alongside the Kennet and Avon Canal (NGR SU 72673, 73482). The building is a public house which is currently closed for business. The owners of the property, Fisherman's Cottage Ltd., are seeking to add a new building to the rear of the public house to provide a number of letting rooms. Previous applications for planning and listed building consent (161742 and 161743) were refused at appeal (APP/E0345/W/17/3177374 and 3177376)
- 1.2 Forum Heritage Services was commissioned to develop the understanding of the building and its setting and thus to identify its significance and prepare a Heritage Statement as required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Heritage Statement then sets out the proposed changes and the potential impact of those changes on the significance of the building.
- 1.3 This Heritage Statement is based on an external and brief internal inspection of the building undertaken in May 2016 by Bob Edwards BSc PG Dip IHBC MCIfA, Director of Forum Heritage Services, who prepared this report.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1" map of 1830 shows a single building standing in the approximate position of Fisherman's Cottage opposite the tongue of land dividing the canal from the river (Figure 1).
- 2.2 The Fisherman's Cottage Inn is recorded as a public house from at least 1840 when J. Westall was the publican (Robson's Directory). In the mid- to late 19th century there was substantial urban expansion with the construction of a large area of terraced housing. From 1879 the public house is shown as a detached building within an area of terraced streets of Victorian date. The 2nd edition 25" map of 1899 (Figure 2) shows little change from the 1879 but provides greater clarity in the definition of buildings. Both maps show that to the rear of the public house was a long, narrow range extending southwards from the east part of the rear elevation. Both this arrangement of the building and its setting remained with little change until the late 20th century when the terraced houses of Albert Road, Leopold Road, Orts Road and those facing onto the canal either side of The Fisherman's Cottage, were demolished and the area redeveloped with the present housing, leaving the public house as a lone reminder of the 19th century development of this part of Reading.

3.0 DESCRIPTION

3.1 The Fisherman's Cottage Inn was added to the *List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest* at Grade II in December 1978. The building is described in the *List* as:

Early C19. Gothick. 2 storeys asymmetrical. Painted ashlar. Slate hipped roof with Picturesque 2 brick chimneys. Flat eaves with corner pendants. 3 bays, centre breaks forward with canted and crenellated bay, wider on ground floor. Above this bay a moulded stone bargeboarded gable with apex pendant. 1st floor left hand window a square oriel with chamfered sides. The canted bay and the oriel have decorative corners to cornice. 2 light metal glazing bar casements with hoodmoulds. 1 light over door to right also with hoodmould. A Royal Fire Insurance Mark.

3.2 The Fisherman's Cottage Inn is a 19th century public house with a near square footprint, the roof being hipped but with a very short ridge of c.1m so that the roof form is almost pyramidal. The roof is dominated by two large stacks, each of four flues with old tall pots.

3.3 The building is rendered and white-washed and the architectural decoration of the building is reserved for the front, north elevation facing the canal (Figure 3). Set slightly to the right of centre is a canted bay, the lower part being slightly larger than the upper part which is crenellated. This canted bay is set within a slightly projecting element with a pediment and decorative barge board. The pendant at the apex of the pediment has been damaged. The ground floor windows of the canted bay are iron-framed fixed lights to the centre face with, to the side faces, iron-framed lights with top opening lights. The upper floor windows are also iron-framed with side-opening casements to the central window which has two large lights with two small lights above and fixed lights to the sides.

3.4 To the left of the canted bay is a two-light iron-framed casement window with chamfered reveals, sloping stone sill and a drip mould with labels over. At first-floor level there is an oriel window, also with an iron-framed two-light casement. To the right of the canted bay is the entrance door with drip moulds and labels above, the door being of vertical boards with hollow-moulded vertical applied strips covering the joins between the boards, the outer strips frame the sides of a glazed light. At first-floor level there is an iron-framed single-light casement with a hood mould over.

3.5 The west flank of the building has a single two-light casement at first-floor level and, attached at ground floor level is a modern conservatory. The east flank of the building has a modern door with a timber-framed window with a top-opening light to the side.

3.6 The rear elevation has, at first-floor level, two two-light iron-framed casements and a single-light timber-framed casement, all in openings with chamfered reveals and sloping projecting sills. To the west part of the elevation at ground floor level is a single storey addition with a pitched roof, the ridge of which lies between the two windows at first-floor level, the east roof slope cutting across the sill of the two-light window. Against the east part of the elevation, and projecting further to the south, is a modern blockwork extension which serves as the cellar to the public house (Figure 4). This element has a mono-pitch roof built against the boundary wall of the car park which also serves as the retaining wall; the car park being at approximately first-floor level of the principal building (Figure 5). Projecting from the lower edge of the mono-pitch is a flat roofed section of approximately 1.0m which extends out across the gable of the pitched roof addition. The roofs of these two elements are covered with an artificial slate. South from the cellar the retaining wall is

also of concrete block with a close-boarded fence above which has modern iron railings of approximately 5 feet in height on the car park side.

3.7 At the south end of the plot to the rear of the public house ground level is at approximately first-floor window sill level of the principal building with the ground falling steeply down to an area of hard-standing which is currently used as a storage area for unwanted furniture etc. from the public house. This area is screened from the patio of the public area by a tall fence, north of which are several small 'cabins' providing outdoor seating, tables and the access into the conservatory building attached to the west elevation of the public house. The link between the principal building and the conservatory is a large opening which has removed the greater part of the wall at ground floor level of the original building.

3.8 To the east of the public house a small grassed area slopes steeply up to the car park which is bounded on its east side by a wall of brick with sections of flintwork and some blockwork. The south boundary is partly marked by a modern brick wall capped with blue engineering bricks.

4.0 SETTING

4.1 The historic setting of The Fisherman's Cottage Inn through much of the 19th and 20th centuries was related to:

- The canal
- Terraced housing of mid- to late 19th century date.

4.2 The Fisherman's Cottage Inn faces onto the canal and it is clear that this was the primary relationship for the building; serving boatmen working the canal and possibly providing stabling for horses which towed the barges. Access from the canal path would have been the principal way of approaching the building. Terraced housing facing onto the canal was built to either side of the public house in the mid- to late 19th century with new streets of houses closing the site off to the south. Even so, the canal path remained the principal access point.

4.3 The present setting has changed substantially in appearance and architectural character with the wholesale demolition of the 19th century housing but the dominant aspects of the setting of the listed building remain; the canal and residential housing. To the west and east are late 20th century buildings; mainly two-storey houses but with a three-storey block immediately to the east of the public house. On the south side of Canal Way is a grassed area with trees around the perimeter on its north-west and south sides with housing to the east. Across the canal to the north are modern blocks of flats extending to four storeys in height in parts with some sections in three storeys replacing what was historically an industrial area including a gas works.

5.0 SIGNIFICANCE

5.1 Fisherman's Cottage Inn is a Grade II listed building and is therefore considered to be a building of significance in a national context. Apart from the cellar range to the rear, there is no requirement to address the significance of the fabric of the public house in accordance with the need for proportionality as noted in the NPPF as there are no internal alterations proposed; its historical association with the canal and the architectural quality of its front elevation are clear and justify its designation as a listed building. Internally,

there have been some significant late 20th century alterations including the removal of a large part of the west wall of the bar area that have harmed the significance of the building.

5.2 The primary issue that needs to be addressed with regard to the proposal is the significance of the setting of the listed building.

5.3 It is evident that the rear of the public house can be seen from the car park and Canal Way. It is necessary to carefully consider the importance of these views to the setting of the listed building and thus its significance. The Historic England guidance *The Setting of Heritage Assets Historic Environment Good Practice in Planning Advice Note 3* (2nd edition, December 2017) says that with respect to views:

11 Views which contribute more to understanding the significance of a heritage asset include:

- those where the composition within the view was a fundamental aspect of the design or function of the heritage asset
- those where town-all village-scape reveals views with unplanned or unintended beauty
- those with historical associations, including viewing points and the topography of battlefields
- those with cultural associations, including landscapes known historically for their picturesque and landscape beauty, those which McCain subject for paintings of the English landscape tradition, those views which have otherwise become historically cherished and protected
- those where relationships between the asset and other heritage assets or natural features or phenomena such as solar or lunar events are particularly relevant.

12 Assets, whether contemporaneous or otherwise, which were intended to be seen from one another for aesthetic, functional, ceremonial or religious reasons include:

- military and defensive sites
- telegraphs or beacons
- prehistoric funerary and ceremonial sites
- historic parks and gardens with deliberate links to other designed landscapes and remote 'eye-catching' pictures or 'borrowed' landmarks beyond the park boundary.

5.4 The fact that the significance of the setting of a heritage asset may not be of the same importance to all parts of that setting is made clear by the Historic England guidance on assessing the degree to which settings and views make a contribution to the significance of a heritage asset or allow its significance to be appreciated (p. 10) where the guidance states:

'A handy way of visualising the contribution of setting to the significance of heritage assets may be diagrammatically to map past and present relationships between a heritage asset and its surroundings, weighting the mapped connections to demonstrate the relative contribution of the relationship to the significance of the asset or the ability to appreciate the significance. By setting out the relationships and considering the level of their contribution significance, it is possible to gauge impact more transparently and more consistently.'

- 5.5 In terms of the setting of The Fisherman's Cottage it is evident that the key aspect of the setting of the listed building is its relationship and association with the canal which survives intact. The canal is the reason the public house was built – to serve the boatmen on waterway. This physical and functional relationship is without doubt the most important aspect of the setting of the listed building. All the finer architectural details of the building are reserved for the elevation facing onto the canal, the side and rear elevations being plain and functional with no architectural adornment; they were evidently not meant to create an impression.
- 5.6 With regard to the setting to the rear of the public house, it must be remembered that when the public house was built the land to the south was no more than agricultural fields. The building was not intended to be seen or approached from this side. This changed to a degree in the mid- to late 19th century when the area around the public house was developed with terraced housing but there is no indication that the public house itself was altered in any way to accommodate new entrances from the rear or to present a more formal elevation towards its new neighbours- most of whom turned their back to the public house (see Figure 2). Subsequently, the wider setting has been substantially altered and, it may be argued, harmed by the large scale modern housing development of limited design quality that now encircles the public house which leaves the Fisherman's Cottage Inn as a rather isolated building in terms of character and architectural quality (Figure 6). Obviously, there are views towards the rear of the public house including from publicly accessible spaces including Canal Way and the car park of the public house. In terms of contributing to the significance of the building, it is considered that this element of the setting of the listed building makes little contribution to the significance of the heritage asset. Additionally, these views clearly do not fit into the types of views identified by Historic England, listed above, which are likely to make the greatest contribution to the understanding of the significance of a heritage asset. The Inspector found that 'the hipped slate roof and the 'attractive substantial red brick chimneys remain visible and noticeable' but simply being able to see a heritage asset from Point A or Point B does not necessarily mean that the view is significant and must be maintained unaltered.
- 5.7 The only element of the building's fabric to be affected by the proposal is the cellar range to the rear which is modern and does not form part of the special interest of the listed building.

6.0 PROPOSALS AND ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

Proposals

- 6.1 The revised proposed scheme still envisages a new block to provide six letting rooms; four at lower ground level in relation to the patio area to the rear of the public house and two at upper ground level in relation to the car park. The building will have a pitched hipped slate roofs with two hipped dormers to the west slope and rendered walls. This residential block is to be set at the south end of the site; for the area between the new building and the rear of the public house it is proposed to effectively create a flat roof over the modern cellar and kitchen range at car park level which will provide three additional parking spaces and a waste storage area. The proposed block will read as being single storey when viewed from the car park and Canal Way with a brick boundary wall marking the western edge of the car park. Part of the modern beer cellar will be demolished.

Assessment of Impact

- 6.2 Historic maps show that until the later 20th century there was a long range extending south from the rear elevation of the public house in the area of the existing cellar and the proposed development. Whilst it is not presently known what height this building was, it is considered that because of its former presence there should be no objection to the principal of this development providing its form and scale respects the principal listed building. The Inspector agreed that there was not an issue with the previous scheme in terms of its footprint which was similar to the current proposal.
- 6.3 The proposed scheme has a greatly reduced scale compared to the previous proposal and it will read as a single storey block when seen from Canal Way. The diminished scale of the current proposal means that the public house remains dominant and the roof and chimneys will remain highly visible in almost all views from the rear of the building – only when viewed from directly south of the proposed new building will the public house be concealed from view. It is considered that the slightly reduced visibility of the rear of the public house will not cause harm to the significance of the listed building through change within its setting or the ability to appreciate the significance of the building through the minor change to the extent of visual access. The proposed development will have no impact upon the most significant element of the setting of the listed building – the area to the front of the public house.
- 6.4 The design of the proposed building reflects a simple 19th century character with a similar palette of materials which sits comfortably alongside the listed building, being clearly subservient and ancillary to the principal listed building. There
- 6.5 The proposed alteration to the cellar range will only impact upon modern fabric which does not contribute to the special interest of the listed building and accordingly, the Inspector raised no issues regarding this aspect of the previous proposal. The partial demolition of the cellar range will not cause harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset.
- 6.6 The listed building has modern buildings that are taller than it set too close to the public house which have undoubtedly harmed the setting of the designated heritage asset, for example, the ridge of the building to the east is 2.92m higher than the ridge of the public house. The proposed building may actually soften the impact of unsympathetic modern buildings on the listed building through obscuring some of the surrounding buildings from view – the modern buildings that can be seen in Figures 5 and 6 will be at least partially screened in these views, a change that can only be seen as a positive change.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 In the appeal judgement in relation to the previous proposals, the Inspector indicated that the principal of development to the rear of the public house was acceptable but that a more sympathetic design was required. It is considered that the revised scheme now submitted achieves this objective, providing six letting rooms and the additional car parking required to service the business, whilst having a very limited impact upon views to the rear of the building. In particular, the roofs and chimneys of the public house will remain highly visible except when viewed from directly south of the proposed new building. It is strongly argued that this relatively small change in the extent of views towards the

listed building will not cause harm to the significance of the heritage asset nor will it have any meaningful impact upon the ability to appreciate the significance of the listed building.

7.2

It is argued, and has been accepted by the Inspector, that the development will bring financial security to the business, allowing the public house to continue trading as such – probably its original function – and so secure its optimum viable and appropriate use and that this is a public benefit. It is concluded that the proposal will not represent harm to the significance of the listed building or harm its setting and that even if the fact that ‘change’ is perceived as being ‘harmful’, the low level of less than substantial harm will be outweighed by the public benefit of the proposal. Therefore, it is concluded that the application conforms with Section 72 of the planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework and Reading Borough Council Core Policies CS7 and CS33.



Figure 1 1st edition Ordnance Survey 1" to a mile map, 1830

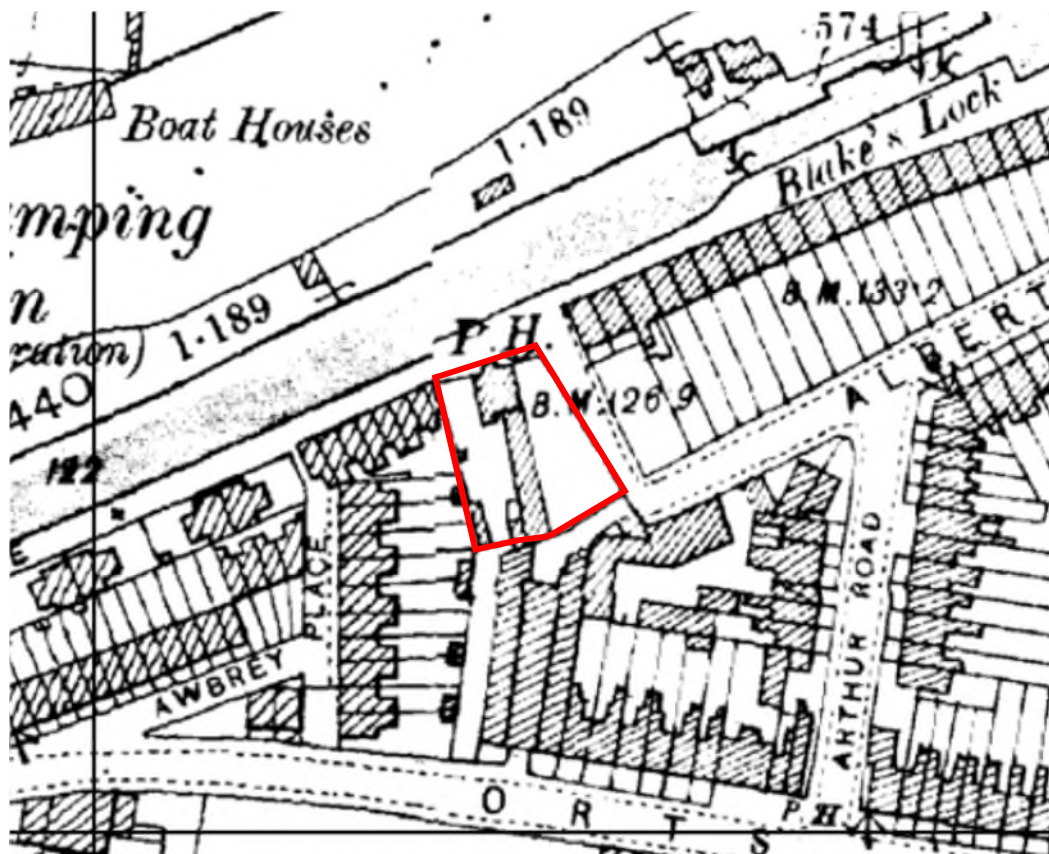


Figure 2 2nd edition Ordnance Survey 25" map, 1899 showing the extent of mid- to late 19th century housing development in the area of The Fisherman's Lodge.



Figure 3 Front elevation



Figure 4 Rear elevation with modern cellar range with the mono-pitch roof to the right. The conservatory extension and modern housing to the west are also visible.



Figure 5 View to the rear elevation from the car park. The boundary wall is the upper part of the rear wall of the cellar range.



Figure 6 The setting of The Fisherman's Cottage Inn as seen from the west of the rear plot.