

No. 36 QUEEN'S ROAD, READING

Heritage Statement



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Bob Edwards
BSc. (Hons.) PG Dip. IHBC MCIfA

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 No. 36 Queen's Road forms part of a terrace of 1830s town houses which are listed as a group at Grade II. The terrace lies on the south side of Queen's Road (NGR SU 71978, 73190). The building has been in office use for some time but now the owners of the property are seeking permission convert the building to residential use, forming four self-contained flats including one flat within a new single storey building to the rear requiring planning and listed building consent. Plans for the proposals are being prepared by Simpson Hilder Associated Ltd.
- 1.2 Forum Heritage Services has been commissioned to make an assessment of the heritage significance of No. 36 and to prepare a Heritage Statement in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Bob Edwards BSc (Hons) PG Dip. IHBC MCIfA, Director of Forum Heritage Services, visited the house in May 2018 and subsequently prepared this report.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The crescent consisting of Nos. 24 – 52 Queen's Road was added to the *List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest* at Grade II in 1957. The terrace is described in the *List* as:

Nos 24 to 52 (even) (Queen's Crescent)
1832-33. J J Cooper architect (according to Colvin). A very slight crescent with houses on a skew, following the curve of the road. 3 storeys Bath stone ashlar. Channelled ground floor. Band over ground floor. Plain cornice and parapet. 3 ranges of glazing bar sashes each, 1st floor centre of each with pediment. Ground floor windows round headed, one each, No 44 1+3 (formerly 2 houses). Bracketed hoods to 4 panel doors with rectangular overlights and architrave surrounds. Butterfly roofs with brick chimneys. No 40 rendered. No 24 has no door but 3 round headed windows on ground floor.

3.0 DESCRIPTION

Exterior

- 3.1 The front elevation of the terraced houses are constructed in Bath stone ashlar, deeply channelled to the ground floor level where there is a large arched window to the centre and the door to the left under a flat hood supported by ogee profile brackets (Figure 1). The upper storeys are of plain ashlar and of three bays with the central window at first floor level having a pediment above. The windows to the first floor are six-over-six hornless sashes with three-over-six hornless sashes to the second floor. The elevation is topped by a cornice.



Figure 1
Front elevation of No. 36
Queen's Road

- 3.2 Due to the crescent form of this terrace and the way the party walls are skewed to the front wall, the rear elevations are each stepped back from one another (Figure 2). Each unit is of two bays with a valley to the centre of each house and hipped slate roofs rising up to the masonry party walls between each house. At the party walls there were originally two stacks serving the back and front rooms but the rear stack between No. 36 and house to the east of the stack has been removed. The rear elevation of No. 36 has slightly wider windows to the west side than the windows, lighting the staircase to the right. The elevations are also constructed in Bath stone.
- 3.3 Extending back from No. 36 is a single-storey outbuilding constructed in flint with brick dressings with a hipped slate roof (Figure 2). In the west elevation there are two windows with brick dressings and stone sills. The bricks used are relatively thick at $2\frac{3}{4}$ " to $2\frac{7}{8}$ " deep. The upper part of the south elevation has been rebuilt in brick and the door and window are modern insertions. A section of what was presumably a boundary wall which ran the full length of the plot is attached to the south-east corner of this outbuilding.



Figure 2 Rear elevation of No. 36 with the single storey outbuilding.

Interior

- 3.4 At ground floor level the front door leads into a hallway with the principal room to the front and a smaller, secondary room to the rear with the stair compartment at the south end of the hallway, divided from the hallway by a doorway. From the side of the stair a door leads into a link which give access to a single storey outbuilding. Stairs to the basement descend beneath the main staircase to the basement. The front skewed relationship of the partly walls to the front elevation is particularly reflected by the position of the front door set at an angle across the end of the hallway.
- 3.5 The entrance hall is a plain space with no cornice and a simple skirting board with a roll moulding. From the hallway a four-panel door gives access to the principal room. This doorway has 5" wide architraves with a 2¼" flat field with an outer ogee moulding. The door also has an ogee moulding to the panels. The door at the south end of the hall has the same architrave as the door to the principal room, but the door has been replaced with a modern, fully glazed door of 15 panes with safety glass.
- 3.6 The front room is irregular in shape due to the angle of the front wall so the room is wider to the west than to the east. The fireplace is to the west wall and has a pale grey marble surround and mantle shelf with a semi-circular headed cast-iron grate (Figure 3). The skirting board to this room is also relatively plain, 8" high with a roll moulding. To the south is a wide opening with three doors of two panels per door, the detailing of the doors and architrave matching the door into the room from the hallway (Figure 4). To the front is a near full-height sash window with an arched upper sash and lamb's tongue glazing bars. There are shutters which are presumably in-situ, but the shutters are stuck with paint. The room has a modern coving with an ogee profile.



Figure 3
Front ground floor
fireplace



Figure 4 Front ground floor room showing the door from the hallway and the three-door opening to the rear room.

- 3.7 The rear room has a large window to the south consisting of an eight-over-eight hornless sash with Grecian ovolo glazing bars. The lower sash appears to be a replacement. Above this is a four-pane fixed light with two horizontal metal bars. There is no cornice or coving to the ceiling, the same form of skirting board as the front room and a plain painted, probably marble surround and mantle shelf with a cast-iron grate to the fireplace (Figure 5). The architrave to the wide opening to the front room matches that of the door having a simple ogee moulding.
- 3.8 The stair compartment occupies the south-east corner of the ground floor, the stairs rising up to the south wall is a simple, typical early 19th century stair with a simple turned newel post with two collars near the base and one collar 2" below the bun finial of the newel (Figure 6). The handrail sweeps up from the newel post but where it meets the string of the upper half of the flight, the handrail is cranked down towards the square base of the newel post at the half-landing (Figure 7). The staircase has narrow stick balusters

measuring $\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{7}{8}$ ". From the stair compartment there is the modern glazed door to the hallway, a four panel door with a slightly narrower ogee moulding to the panels than on the door the front room, both of these doorways having simple ogee profile architraves.



Figure 5 Fireplace to rear ground floor room.



Figure 6
Stairs from ground to first floor – lower part showing the newel post.

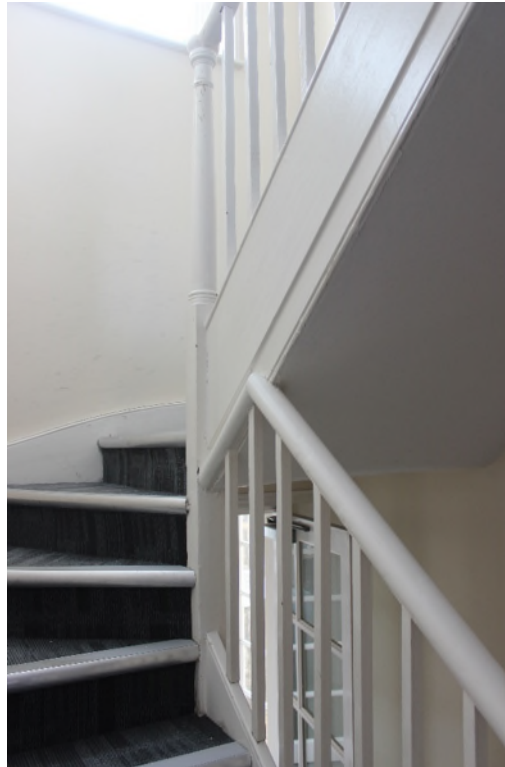


Figure 7
Stairs from ground to first floor – cranked handrail to lower half of the flight.

- 3.9 The single storey block to the rear provides a single space apart from some modern partitions which enclose a kitchenette in the north-east corner, has modern plastered walls and a presumably boarded ceiling. A modern, fully glazed door gives access to the entrance lobby linking this building to the back of the main house. To the west wall there are two three-over-six sashes, both with Grecian ovolo glazing bars whilst to the south wall there is a four-over-eight sash window with heavy rectangular glazing section bars. The door to the south elevation is also modern, fully glazed door with 15 panes per light.
- 3.10 At second floor level the plan is similar to that at ground floor level with the principal room to the front and a smaller room to the rear. The front room retains a marble surround to the fireplace of typical Regency design with plain pilasters to the sides and roundels to the caps with an ornate cast-iron grate and inner surround in-situ (Figure 8). The joinery to this room is slightly finer than at ground floor level, the architrave to the door from the landing having a small step creating two flat fields rather than one wide field as at ground floor level and the skirting board is also slightly more elaborate with a small step mid-height on the flat face. The windows have Grecian ovolo mouldings to the glazing bars. The coving is modern. Within the rear room there is also a surviving fireplace, probably marble but now painted. Again, there is a modern ogee coving to the room. The original staircase continues up to second floor level.



Figure 8 Front first floor room.

- 3.11 The larger front room at second floor level has a large down stand aligned north – south on the line of the valley between the two roof slopes over the property, which is supported by two large modern chamfered wooden posts (Figure 9). The fireplaces at this level have been blocked and the doors to the rooms from the landing are modern. Two of the three windows to the front room retain historic sashes, but the central window has been replaced with a sash with plain square-edged glazing bars. The window to the rear room has also been altered in that the top sash is of six lights whilst the lower sash is of eight lights. At the top of the staircase a kitchenette has been inserted on the landing which has probably resulted

in the removal of the section of balustrade from the top newel post to the east wall. On the west side of the stair compartment a WC has been inserted.

- 3.12 The basement is a relatively plain space with little of architectural interest visible. There is a fireplace opening to the front room but no surround or grate and the windows to the front and rear rooms are modern plastic double-glazed units. These rooms have laminate flooring and modern doors. The stairs to the basement have been remodelled, re-using an original newel post at the bottom the stairs (with a replacement bun finial) and having large, modern stick balusters and a modern handrail (Figure 10).



Figure 9 Second floor front room.



Figure 10
Stairs to the basement

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 No. 36 Queen's Road is a Grade II listed building forming part of a terrace and so is regarded as a building of significance in a national context.

4.2 Historic England's *Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2* (March 2015) states that understanding the nature of significance is important for understanding the need for and best means of conservation. Understanding the extent of that significance leads to a better understanding of how adaptable a heritage asset may be. Understanding the level of significance provides the essential guide as to how policies should be applied. The following descriptive appraisal will evaluate the building against listed selection criteria of 'Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings', (DCMS, 2010). Historic England's criteria outlined in 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance,' which partially overlap with the Statutory Criteria, have also been considered and encompass the following values:

- **Evidential Value** – relating to the potential of a place to yield primary evidence about past human activity;
- **Historical Value** – relating to ways in which the present can be connected through a place to past people, events and aspects of life;
- **Aesthetic Value** – relating to the ways in which people derive sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place;
- **Communal Value** – relating to the meanings of place for the people who relate to it, and whose collective experience or memory it holds.

The grading of values is considered using three categories: low, medium and high.

4.3 No. 36 is a relatively intact example of a late Georgian-style terraced house which retains the majority of its historic staircase (only the section of the stair to the basement has been altered with reconstructed balustrades), four presumably original fireplaces, most of its historic windows and internal doors at ground and first floor level and detailing such as skirting boards at ground and first floor level. As a relatively unaltered example, it is considered that the house has a relatively high historical and evidential values. The terrace has high aesthetic value to the front elevation, and certainly the principal rooms at ground and first floor level also have high aesthetic values. The appearance of the rear elevation of the terrace in general has been significantly and negatively impacted by the replacement of almost all of the original the outbuildings to the rear and the wholesale change of the rear garden areas to car parking which has harmed the setting of the listed buildings. Whilst there have been some modifications to the rear elevations of houses themselves, the changes to the plots behind are the factors which impact most upon the aesthetic value of the rear which is now the low end of medium at best.

4.4 The outbuilding to the rear appears to be, if not the sole surviving example of the original outbuildings provided for each of the houses, it is certainly the least altered externally although the south gable end has evidently been altered with new openings inserted and so is considered to have medium aesthetic value. Internally however, it has lost all evidence of its former use and so in terms of historical and evidential value, these are relatively low.

5.0 PROPOSALS & ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

Proposals

- 5.1 The proposal is to convert No. 36, lately used as offices, to form four residential flats, three within the main block of the house; one flat occupying the basement and ground floor and one flat at both first and second floor levels, and one flat within the single storey building to the rear.

Assessment of Impact

- 5.2 The terrace was originally built as houses and so a return to residential use is an appropriate use for the building.
- 5.3 At ground floor level there is little change proposed. The hallway and stair compartment will be communal areas meaning that the stair to the basement is to be re-located to within the rear room. The balustrades to the basement section of the staircase are largely modern – only the newel at the bottom of the stair is historic, and this has a modern bun finial. Whilst the relocation of the stair is a change to plan form, a similar proposal has recently been permitted at No. 38 (17/1734/FULL & 17/0165/LBC). The repositioning of the stair has also been allowed at No. 28 (07/1368/LBC) – the new stair descending from within the front ground floor room. It is therefore clear that this change is not considered by the local authority to be harmful to the significance of the listed building.
- 5.4 The basement is an area of limited architectural quality or interest. The repositioning of the dividing wall between the front and rear parts will not have an impact on plan form – there will still be two rooms, front and rear. The fabric of the dividing wall is 19th century brickwork and in terms of historic fabric, will have little significance in its own right.
- 5.5 The proposals at first and second floor will provide two flats of the same layout. The proposed alterations include the insertion of a bathroom positioned to the south of the chimney breast of the front rooms and the insertion of a partition wall to create a hallway, also within the front rooms. Although not identical, a similar position for the bathroom has been permitted at No. 28 in which the front rooms at first and second floor were also subdivided to form two rooms and a hallway (07/1368/LBC). The proposals also reflect the approved alterations at No. 38 at first floor level (17/0165). At No. 46 the first-floor front room has been divided into two separate bedrooms, each with small ensuite bathrooms set against the north side of the partition wall between the front and rear rooms (16/0419). This approved scheme clearly had a much larger impact upon the character of the room than the existing scheme proposes but was permitted.
- 5.6 At second floor level it is proposed to remove the partition forming the WC immediately west of the stair compartment. This is a later insertion and does not contribute to the special interest of listed building and will restore the proportions of the rear room to the benefit of the listed building.
- 5.7 It is proposed to the single-storey flint and brick outbuilding to the rear of the property and re-build a new, larger single storey outbuilding using reclaimed flint from the existing structure. From historic mapping it is possible to see that each house had a similar-sized

outbuilding to the rear and it is clear from the sequence of historic maps that the majority were still present when the terrace was listed in 1957. However, since that date, most have been demolished, often being rebuilt with substantially larger buildings, some of which are of limited architectural quality. It is clear that the local authority has given little significance to the outbuildings, allowing changes which generally maintain a single storey form set to one side of the plot and extending back from the rear elevation of the listed building. It is considered that the proposed design, maintaining the flint and brick walling and a slate roof, will provide the additional space required whilst providing a building that reflects the character of the existing and so producing a building that will be of a higher quality than most of the present outbuildings which have been permitted.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sets out the statutory approach to managing designated buildings and areas; Section 66 requires that 'special regard to be given to the desirability of preserving a listed building and any features of architectural or historic interest it possesses and its setting' – a matter the Courts have held should be afforded considerable importance and weight. The statutory approach is reflected in Reading Borough Council Core Policy CS33. Paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) says when considering the impact of new development on the significance of a heritage asset, great weight should be given to its conservation.
- 6.2 It is considered that the proposed alterations to No. 36 Queens Road will not cause harm to the significance or 'special architectural or historic interest' of the designated heritage asset. Accordingly, I can find no conflict in the proposed development with the statutory duty in Section 66 of the Act, National Policy in the NPPF or Reading Borough Council Core Policy CS33 and conclude that the application should be allowed.

