

FORMER RED LION PUBLIC HOUSE & No. 38, SOUTHAMPTON STREET, READING

Heritage Statement



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Revised June 2018

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The former Red Lion public house and No. 38 Southampton Street are unlisted buildings standing on the west side of Southampton Street which leads south from Reading town centre (NGR SU 19055 69463). The buildings do not lie within a Conservation Area although the Market Place and London Street Conservation Area includes the Grade II listed St Giles's Church which stands opposite on the east side of Southampton Street. Initial plans for the redevelopment of the former public house alone were prepared by AWW Architects on behalf of the owner Vogue Assets Ltd. Pre-application advice has been sought from Reading Borough Council (162081). These plans envisaged the retention and extension of the existing building although the plans suggest change to the appearance of the front elevation. The present scheme now seeks to demolish both the former public house and the attached building, No. 38, and replace them with a new building. A structural survey of the site has also been undertaken by Scott, White & Hookins Ltd.
- 1.2 Forum Heritage Services has been commissioned to develop an understanding of the significance of the buildings and their contribution to the setting of the adjacent listed buildings and to prepare a Heritage Statement as required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Heritage Statement then examines the potential impact of the proposed demolition of the existing buildings on the setting of the listed buildings.
- 1.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (Glossary) makes it clear that the setting of a heritage asset is the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate the significance of an asset, or may be neutral.
- 1.4 The Historic England Guidance on the Setting of Heritage Assets states that views which contribute to understanding the significance of heritage assets include those where the relationship between the asset and other historic assets or places are particularly relevant. The guidance sets out a staged approach to the assessment of understanding the significance of setting:
- 1 Identification of heritage assets and the extent of their settings
 - 2 Assess whether, how and what degree the settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage assets
 - 3 Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful on the significance.

- 1.5 This Heritage Statement is based on an external and internal inspection of the buildings undertaken in September and December 2017 by Bob Edwards BSc PG Dip IHBC MCIfA, Director of Forum Heritage Services, who prepared this report.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Southampton Street was the focus for a suburb to the main core of settlement to the north of the river in the medieval period. St Giles' Church is recorded from the 12th century but Speed's map of the town dating from the early 17th century shows only a couple of buildings standing opposite the church; the main built-up areas of the street were to the north and south of the church and along Crown Lane (now Crown Street) which linked across to London Street.
- 2.2 By the 19th century the street frontages opposite and to the north and south of the church were almost fully built-up with only small gaps in the frontage, for example, the small access to a burial ground that ran behind a large block of properties including the Red Lion. The 1879 1:500 map suggests that the Red Lion only occupied the three-storey building.
- 2.3 The Red Lion public house ceased trading in 2015 and has since been vacant apart from being used by squatters for a period of time.

3.0 DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 The principal element of the former Red Lion is a three-storey building of three bays with white painted render to the front elevation, the south gable end above a two-storey element and to the eastern part of the north elevation (Figure 1). The ground floor windows are currently boarded over; they are large openings that are probably later insertions. At first floor level there are six-over-six sashes and three-over-three sashes to the second floor, the latter having very shallow segmental arches over. Between the ground and first floor level there is a wide timber sign board across the whole of the front elevation and wrapping around the corner to the north elevation and between the first and second floor windows there is a wide, slightly projecting band which rises up to a stone 'capping' set centrally to the three-bay section – the band continuing as the parapet to the adjacent building to the south. The roof is a shallow-pitched slate roof hidden behind a parapet to the front elevation and there are large stacks to each gable end, that to the north rising only slightly above the coped gables.
- 3.2 To the south of the principal element of the building is a two-storey element which also has a painted render front with a parapet but this parapet conceals one bay of a pitched tiled roof, the second, southern bay forming part of a separate property, No. 38 (Figure 2). Between these two bays is a square ridge stack.
- 3.3 The remaining part of the north elevation is of unpainted brick laid in Flemish bond, as is the rear elevation (Figure 3). The openings to the rear elevation have segmental arches over and there is some evidence for alteration to some of the openings. Across the whole of the ground floor of the rear elevation there is a flat-roofed single-storey modern extension.



Figure 1 Front and north elevations



Figure 2 The former Red Lion, front elevation showing the two-storey element to the south of the principal block



Figure 3 Rear elevation above the single storey extension with the rendered south elevation to the right.

- 3.4 Internally, the ground floor area of the main three-storey element of the building is now a single space with the bar along the south side of the space. The ceiling has a number of encased down stands which presumably conceal steel beams, some of which at least will mark the presence of former walls. There are no open fireplaces or fire surrounds within the ground floor rooms. The area to the south of the bar lies within the building with the lower roof. The room here extends back beyond the line of this smaller, narrower building and, when compared to the bay representing No. 38, it is clear that there is no historic rear wall or ceiling surviving to this element.
- 3.5 A modern stair rises from within the single storey addition to the rear of the first floor. At first floor level what appears to have been two rooms served by two fireplaces on the north wall have been amalgamated to form one space. The fireplace to the former front room is of painted brick with a simple painted surround – the small bricks and arched openings suggest that it was rebuilt in the early 20th century. The fireplace to the former rear room has simple painted surround, possibly of stone, with bulls-eye roundels at the upper corners. This surround is typical of an early 19th century date. A further small bedroom faces to the front but retains no features of architectural interest. There are no historic doors surviving at this level. From the top of the stairs, two steps lead to a door giving access to the room within the upper part of the two-storey section of the public house. This room was not accessible at the time of survey.
- 3.6 From the first floor a closed string stair rises to the second floor which has simple 19th century painted banister with a plain turned newel post and square stick balusters. On this top floor there are four small rooms, one of which was inaccessible the time of survey. Two of the rooms have

small blocked fireplaces, apparently having had the surrounds removed in the past whilst in one room a surround has clearly been removed more recently. Again, there are no surviving historic doors at this level.

- 3.7 No. 38 has a single bay rendered frontage and gable wall with a tile roof, gabled to the south (Figure 4). This element has been extended with various phases of two storey and single storey additions to the rear.
- 3.8 Internally, the front door gives access to a lobby formed by modern partitions, the lobby being taken out of the main room. This room has a low ceiling with an axial spine beam and exposed joists ($2\frac{1}{4}$ - $2\frac{1}{2}$ " wide), all of which are heavily painted (Figure 5). The spine beam is chamfered and has a simple run out stop to the south. To the north the beam is set into a large stack which has been boarded over from floor to ceiling. The line of the original rear wall is marked by the girt beam which appears to be supported by three posts, the post to the north having a short brace up to the beam. Whilst this post is part of the primary build, the brace is not and is fastened by screws. The central post appears to be an insertion. Although there are peg holes in the area where the post stands, generally there does not seem to be the typical evidence for studs forming wall framing as would be expected for a rear wall. The modern stairs are set west of the line of the former rear wall. Beyond, to the rear are later elements with no features of architectural interest.
- 3.9 At first floor level there is also an historic ceiling with a spine beam and exposed joists. These joists are relatively narrow and the spine beam is a relatively irregular timber, probably due to the loss of sap wood. Remains of a chamfer survive at the northern end. There is no exposed framing in the walls.



Figure 4 No. 38, front and south elevations.



Figure 5 No. 38, front room with exposed ceiling joists.



Figure 6 Ceiling beams to the first floor bedroom within the single bay of No. 38.

- 3.10 Although there is access to the attic, the roof space has been lined out and apart from part of the tie beam against the face of the stack, no historic fabric is visible.

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 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.

4.2 The selection of buildings for addition to the statutory *List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest* is informed by a set of criteria set out in *Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings*, (DCMS, 2010).

Architectural Interest. To be of special architectural interest a building must be of importance in its architectural design, decoration or craftsmanship; special interest may also apply to nationally important examples of particular building types and techniques (e.g. buildings displaying technological innovation or virtuosity) and significant plan forms;

Historic Interest. To be of special historic interest a building must illustrate important aspects of the nation's social, economic, cultural, or military history and/or have close historical associations with nationally important people. There should normally be some quality of interest in the physical fabric of the building itself to justify the statutory protection afforded by listing.

Age and rarity. The older a building is, and the fewer the surviving examples of its kind, the more likely it is to have special interest. The following chronology is meant as a guide to assessment; the dates are indications of likely periods of interest and are not absolute. The relevance of age and rarity will vary according to the particular type of building because for some types, dates other than those outlined below are of significance. However, the general principles used are that:

- before 1700, all buildings that contain a significant proportion of their original fabric are listed;
- from 1700 to 1840, most buildings are listed;
- after 1840, because of the greatly increased number of buildings erected and the much larger numbers that have survived, progressively greater selection is necessary;
- particularly careful selection is required for buildings from the period after 1945;
- buildings of less than 30 years old are normally listed only if they are of outstanding quality and under threat.

Aesthetic merits. The appearance of a building – both its intrinsic architectural merit and any group value – is a key consideration in judging listing proposals, but the special interest of a building will not always be reflected in obvious external visual quality. Buildings that are important for reasons of technological innovation, or as illustrating particular aspects of social or economic history, may have little external visual quality.

Former Red Lion

- 4.3 The principal element of the former Red Lion is thought to be a purpose-built public house of 19th century date, the present building probably being of mid- to later 19th century date. The building has been subject to major alteration internally with total loss of plan form at ground floor level and some loss at first floor level where the two principal rooms have been knocked into one room. These works clearly involved substantial structural works with encased steels spanning the enlarged ground floor room. Such works will have evidently impacted upon the historic floor structure and it is questionable how much of this survives. The staircase from ground to first floor level has been replaced and possibly reconfigured but the stair between the first and second floors is of 19th century date. There has been substantial loss of other original joinery; no original doors remain whilst there are a few historic windows surviving, the main windows at ground floor level are 20th century replacements. At first floor level there is one historic surround to a fireplace. No historic fireplaces survive at ground floor level.
- 4.4 Whilst the front elevation of the former Red Lion has some architectural and aesthetic interest, it has been altered with the probable enlargement and alteration of the ground floor fenestration. The rear and north elevations have little architectural merit. Internally, it is considered that the building has been subject to a level of change that has almost completely eroded the 19th century public house character, particularly at ground floor level where no features of architectural or historic interest survive. At first floor level there is a slightly higher degree of survival but there has still be loss of important features. At second floor level there are no features of interest such as fireplaces. It appears that there has been a public house called the Red Lion on this site since the early 19th century at least and so, as a former public house within a suburban area of Reading, the building will have some historical value although given the extent of change to this part of the town, this significance is now limited. There are no known individuals of national or local significance associated with this property. According to the listing criteria, most buildings of the period 1700-1840 are listed and after 1840 greater selection is necessary – but the guidance notes that the dates are not clear cut-offs – they are for guidance only. There is not a clear construction date for the Red Lion – a mid-century date is possible. However, whether it is pre- or post-1840, it is considered that the extent of change to the interiors of the building have left it with little that may be regarded as ‘special architectural or historic interest’ in a national context and as such does not merit designation. There are undoubtedly many examples of public houses and hotels of this period that retain a much higher level of integrity.
- 4.5 The southern part of the former Red Lion incorporates a section of an independent, earlier structure which formed part of a larger building, the southern bay of which is No. 38. Within the former Red Lion, the fabric of the earlier building has been totally removed at ground floor level resulting in a complete loss of historic plan, features and character. The upper storey of this element was not accessible at the time of the survey but it is clear that at least part of the front slope of the roof has been removed to allow for the insertion of the window and presumably the raising of the ceiling level as the ceiling height at ground floor level has been raised. Therefore, it is unlikely that beamed ceilings will survive in the northern half of the building.

No. 38 Southampton Street

- 4.6 No. 38 Southampton Street occupies the southern bay what appears to have been be a two-bay two-storey building to the south of the former Red Lion, the northern bay of which now forms the south part of the former Red Lion. The exposed timbers of what is assumed to have been the original rear wall retains a principal post that extends to the ground but the evidence for other wall framing is unclear – the central post is a later insertion. Assuming the building had two bays, one either side of a large stack, it may have been a lobby-entry plan house, presumably of 17th century date. The presumed rebuilding of the front wall and rendering has removed/concealed the evidence to prove this. Alternatively, it is possible that the building was constructed as two cottages sharing a stack – an arrangement that could date from the 18th century. The relatively thin joists indicate a date not before the 17th century whilst those to the ceiling of the first-floor room are set in sockets that are larger than the joists suggesting re-use or rebuilding. There are no fireplaces exposed within the building and the staircase is a modern insertion set to the west of the assumed rear wall. A modern extension has been built to the rear.
- 4.7 No. 38 Southampton Street appears to consist of one bay of a two-bay house which may have had a lobby-entry plan of 17th century date or be one of a pair of 18th century cottages sharing a large central stack. In considering the significance of No. 38 it is necessary to view it in the context of the original extent of the building – a building of at least two bays, perhaps three. The bay within the former Red Lion has been substantially altered and it is questionable whether any of its fabric survives at ground floor level at least and possibly below roof level – and part of the roof has probably been removed to allow for the raised eaves to the front. So, even if No. 38 was complete the fragmentary remains within the former Red Lion mean that only a little over 50% of the two-bay building survives – and, obviously less if it was a three-bay building. But, No. 38 does not appear to be complete – the rear wall has little framing below the girt beam and if the building was timber-framed originally, the framing to the front and south gable walls has been replaced. The joists to the ceiling at first floor level do not appear to be original, or the beam is a re-used timber. With no historic staircase, No. 38 appears to retain little that may be regarded as being of ‘special architectural interest’. The listing criteria states that all buildings pre-dating 1700 which ‘retain a significant proportion of their original fabric are listed’. The previous wording for this date category, used in PPG15, differed slightly in that buildings that survive in ‘anything like their original form’ would be listed. Both are subjective measurements – what is a *significant* proportion? The significance of a ‘proportion’ will at least partly depend upon the rarity of the building type – a smaller proportion of a rare or unique building type is more likely to be listed than a similar level of survival of a common building type. It is considered that if the remains within No. 38 represent part of a lobby-entry house of 17th century date, this is not a particularly rare or unusual house type and relatively high numbers of such buildings survive in states of near completeness. As an altered one bay with the second bay substantially eroded it is considered that No. 38 does not fulfil the criteria in terms of date, survival and rarity. There are no persons of note known to be associated with the property and whilst the building stands within what was a medieval suburban area of Reading, the historical value is considered to be at the low end of medium. The alteration to the front elevation, extensions to the rear and the treatment of the interior means that the aesthetic value of building is limited.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 As a mid- to later 19th century public house the former Red Lion is a building which retains little of its 19th century character other than the front elevation, which is not a particularly fine or complete example. Whilst not without some interest, it is considered that the extent of internal alteration and loss of original features means the building does not retain sufficient architectural or historic interest to merit designation as a listed building.
- 6.2 No. 38 represents no more than half of a building, the remnants of the other half are within the adjacent former Red Lion. No. 38 has been subject to change, possibly extensive if it was originally timber-framed as might be suggested by the former rear wall – which now retains only a principal post at ground floor level. The thin ceiling joists at first floor level which do not fit the sockets in the spine beam suggest re-use of the beam or reconstruction of the ceiling. It is considered that the remaining elements of this building do not represent a sufficiently ‘significant proportion’ of the building, and the remains do not represent a building surviving in something like its original condition. Therefore, it is argued that, although also not without interest, the remains of the building within No. 38 are not of sufficient rarity, architectural or historic interest to merit designation as a listed building.
- 6.3 The Planning Authority have sought advice from Historic England regarding the potential for these two buildings to be designated as listed buildings. The LPA have indicated that ‘Historic England... have informally advised that the buildings do not appear to be listable, based on the information provided to them’ (quoted from email from Jonathan Markwell, Principal Planning Officer, 24 May 2018). The Historic England view is, therefore, in line with the opinion expressed in this report.
- 6.4 The replacement of these buildings will not result in the loss of significant buildings; their loss can be mitigated through an appropriate level of archaeological building recording.