

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

Heritage Statement



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December 2017

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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. 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.
- 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 not 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 Historic England guidance on the assessment of setting states that the importance of setting lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset. This depends on a wide range of physical elements within, as well as perceptual and associational attributes pertaining to, the heritage asset's surroundings.

Former Red Lion & No. 38

4.3 The principal element of the former Red Lion is a building of 19th century date, the present building probably being of 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. The staircase from ground to first floor level has been replaced although the stair between the first and second floors is of 19th century date. There has been substantial loss of other internal joinery; no original doors remain. There are some historic windows surviving. Given the extent of change to this building it is clear that it does not retain sufficient architectural or historic interest to merit addition to the *List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest*.

4.4 The two-storey element to the south, the northern bay of which now forms the south part of the former Red Lion with the south bay being N. 38 represents an earlier building. The exposed timbers of what is assumed to have been the original rear wall show that a post extended to the ground but the evidence for other wall framing is unclear. The building had one bay either side of a large stack and may have been a lobby-entry house, presumably of 17th century date, but the rebuilding of the front wall has removed 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. Within the former Red Lion the fabric of this building has been totally removed at ground floor level resulting in a complete loss of historic 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, there will not be the survival of beamed ceilings in the northern half of the building.

4.5 Although not listable, the two buildings will have some heritage value. The following discussion and rating of value is set at a lower level than if this was a designated heritage asset or potential designated heritage asset. As a 19th century building the former Red Lion offers very limited potential for providing new information that will enable a better understanding of the origins and development of the building. Therefore, evidential value is low. 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. The front elevation has a strong 19th century polite character and may be considered to have medium aesthetic value. Communal value is difficult to assess without consultation with the communities for whom a site or building may have some value. Given that the public house has closed for business it is likely that the communal value of this property is relatively low. Overall, it is considered that the building is not without some heritage value which is almost wholly derived from its front elevation.

- 4.6 The remains of the two-bay house to the south of the former Red Lion may represent a lobby-entry house of 17th century date or an 18th century pair of cottages sharing a large central stack. It is clear that the building has lost a large part of its historic fabric; almost all of the northern bay has been lost apart from the possibility that part of the roof survives. The southern part retains two historic ceilings but if originally timber-framed, all wall framing has been lost. The building has some evidential value – there is a possibility that a date for its construction could be obtained through the use of dendrochronology. Exposure of fabric currently concealed by cladding could also add to the understanding of the origins of the building. Therefore, evidential value is considered to be medium. The extent of change erodes the historical value of the building and there are no persons of note known to be associated with the property and so 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 and it is expected that this building will have little communal value. Whilst there are elements of an historic building in this property, given the high degree of loss, it is questionable whether sufficient survives to warrant identifying the building as a non-designated heritage asset – if it is seen as such, its significance is low.

Contribution to setting of listed buildings

- 4.5 There are three listed buildings close (but at least once removed) to the former Red Lion and No. 38; to the north is 26 and 28 Southampton Street, No. 26 being of early 19th century date and No 28 an early 20th century building in a 17th century style, both structures re-using some earlier elements such as a timber mullioned window, and to the east, on the opposite side of Southampton Street is St Giles' Church, a late 19th century rebuilding of the medieval church that stood on this site.
- 4.6 This area of Reading has been subject to substantial change that has had a major, harmful, impact on the setting of these listed buildings; The elevated ring road just to the north with a roundabout beneath, the multi-storey car park of the Oracle shopping centre and the large hotel building to the north of the church have resulted in the character of the area to the north of the site and church being one of modern large-scale infrastructure. Immediately north of the church along Deansgate is modern two storey housing of a very plain, utilitarian character. South of the former public house are two large blocks of three storey in height. As the Conservation Officer noted in comments on the pre-application submission, the former Red Lion is isolated from its historic context. In addition to the almost total re-writing of the townscape north and west of the church, views north along Southampton Street towards the church are harmed by the large road sign that bridges the street. From this point to the south the quality of the townscape improves, largely due to the survival of a terrace of 19th century three storey town houses on the west side of the street and the parish rooms south of the church.

- 4.7 Given the extent of change that has occurred within the townscape around the church, it is considered that the former Red Lion and No. 38 now makes little in the way of a positive contribution to the setting of the Church of St Giles or the significance of the listed building. The church originated within a suburban area of the town; that general suburban setting remains albeit with an almost total loss of historic character in the area of Southampton Street near the church and to the north, the area within which the proposed development site sits. The relationship between the former Red Lion and No. 38 and the listed Nos. 26 and 28 to the north is weak – particularly when viewed from the south along the street. Other than forming part of a built-up street frontage, it is considered that the former Red Lion and No. 38 contribute little to the significance of these two listed buildings.

5.0 PROPOSAL & ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

Proposal

- 5.1 The current proposal is to demolish the existing building and replace it with a new building having a maximum of four storeys. This assessment considers the impact of the demolition of the historic building.

Assessment of Impact

- 5.2 The former Red Lion is a building of 19th century date and it does retain limited architectural and aesthetic integrity in terms of its front elevation. However, the structural survey has raised serious concerns about the structural condition of the building and has recommended that, given the extent of major areas of rebuilding that would be required, the property should be demolished. The demolition of a building with some, limited, heritage value may be regarded as representing a low level of harm to the historic environment but given the structural issues and the doubts over the viability of a project that involved extensive structural repairs and the on-going maintenance and marketability of the property, demolition and replacement with a new building of appropriate design appears to be the necessary course of action.
- 5.3 The smaller former two-bay building, now partly within the former Red Lion has some interest as it contains elements of, potentially a 17th century building but it is considered that the limited value of the surviving fabric means that it not considered that there is a justifiable argument to retain what does survive. Therefore, it is argued that a programme of archaeological building recording prior to and during demolition to obtain as full an understanding of the origins and development of the building as possible and create an appropriate archive will off-set the harm to a historic building of low significance.
- 5.4 In terms of the setting of the listed buildings, particularly the church, it is considered that due to the extent of change that has already occurred in this area, the former Red Lion now makes such a limited contribution to the setting of St Giles' Church that its loss will not represent harm to the significance of the listed building. The contribution of the former Red Lion to the setting of Nos 26 and 28 Southampton Street to the north is even less than its contribution to the church and so it is considered that the demolition of the existing building and its replacement with a

building of appropriate form and scale will not cause harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sets out the statutory approach and requires 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 under Section 66 – a matter the Courts have held should be afforded considerable importance and weight. The statutory approach is reflected in Policy CS33 of the Reading Borough Council Core Strategy which requires proposals to protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment, adding that designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced in a manner *appropriate to their significance*. Paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) says when considering the impact of new development on the significance of a listed building, great weight should be given to its conservation, and adds that significance can be harmed or lost through development within its setting. As these heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm should require clear and convincing justification.

6.2 It is concluded that the proposed demolition of the former Red Lion and No. 38 and their replacement with a new building will have a minor impact upon an area within the setting of the listed building. The former Red Lion retains limited heritage value other than the aesthetic value of the front elevation but is understood to have significant structural issues. No. 38 is a much altered building which has some interest which merits recording but is not of such significance as to necessitate retention. As such, it is considered that overall, the loss of these buildings will not harm the setting of nearby designated heritage assets and so the proposals comply with Section 66 of the Act, National Policy in the NPPF and Policy CS33 of the Reading Borough Council Core Strategy.