

# RIDGE

PROPERTY & CONSTRUCTION CONSULTANTS



University of  
Reading

## HERITAGE STATEMENT

The Acacias Building, London Road, Reading.

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### Prepared for

**University of Reading**  
Estates and Facilities  
Whiteknights, PO Box 235  
Reading  
RG6 6BW

### Prepared by

**Ridge and Partners LLP**  
Beaumont House  
59 High Street  
Theale  
Reading  
RG7 5AL

Tel: 0116 245 6600

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Acacias Building

This statement has been prepared by Ridge and Partners LLP in support of an application by the University of Reading in respect of essential external repair works at Acacias, London Road, Reading, RG1 5AQ. Under current planning policies the site and surrounding areas are considered to be of historic interest and a full assessment has been made in the environmental significance of the proposed work to both the building, site and surrounding areas.

This statement should be read in conjunction with all other supporting documentation submitted with the application for listed building consent, including photographs to the rear of this document and the Design and Access Statement.

The Kendrick Road conservation area encompasses the University of Reading's London Road campus. The area contains a number of historic buildings characteristic of the late 18th century, 19th century and the inter-war years.

The University took ownership of the building in 1904 and the building was afforded with Grade II listed status in 1978. The listing refers to Acacias as a detached two storey and basement villa of Bath stone with hipped slate roof.

At present, the building basement comprises a wine cellar, storage and a meeting room, with further University accommodation at ground and first floor levels. Three flats are located at first floor level, with a further flat located in the second floor loft conversion.

### 1.2 Heritage Statement

Our Heritage Statement will identify the relative value of heritage assets and provide an Impact Assessment which considers the potential impact of the proposed works on the significance of the heritage assets identified and the contribution made by their setting. This will provide an impact assessment to satisfy the provisions of Sections 16(2), 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) where the impact of development on heritage assets is being considered (Paragraphs 128-135).

## 2. HERITAGE POLICY AND GUIDANCE

### 2.1 Legislation

The primary legislation relating to listed buildings and Conservation Areas is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Section 16(2) states *“In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”*

Section 66(1) reads: *“In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”*

In relation to conservation areas, Section 72(1) reads: *“Special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.”*

### 2.2 National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) directs local planning authorities to require an applicant to *“describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting”* and the level of detailed assessment should be *“proportionate to the assets’ importance”* (Paragraph 128).

The NPPF then asks the Planning Authorities to *“take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal”* (Paragraph 129). This results in the need for a Heritage Impact Assessment.

Paragraph 132 states that *“When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. The more important the asset, the greater”*.

The NPPF requires a balance to be applied in the context of heritage assets, including the recognition of potential benefits from a development paragraph 134 provides the following: *“Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.”*

In the case of non-designated heritage assets, Paragraph 135 requires a *“balanced judgement”* having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

The NPPF therefore recognises the need to clearly identify relative significance at an early stage and then to judge the impact of development proposals in that context.

### 2.3 National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) identifies how important determining applications on the basis of significance is, and explains how the tests of harm and impact within the NPPF should be considered.

In particular, the NPPG notes the following in relation to the evaluation of harm: *“In determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest.”*

## 2.4 The Local Plan Core Strategy

The Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy was adopted in January 2008 and altered in January 2015.

The Local Development Framework (LDF) sets out current policies for development works within the borough. In assessing planning applications, Reading Borough Council utilises the policies set out within the LDF Core Strategy.

The LDF refers directly to heritage assets, and Core Strategy ‘CS33: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment’ can be directly applied to the proposal.

Policy CS33 states that ‘Planning permission will only be granted where development has no adverse impact on historic assets and their settings’.

## 2.5 Kendrick Conservation Area Character Appraisal

In addition to the Core Strategy, a local character assessment for the Kendrick Conservation area was undertaken in 2005.

The appraisal states that *‘The Acacias is an early 19th century Bath stone villa set in landscaped grounds and enclosed behind iron railings to the street. It has many fine external and internal features including two ground floor bow windows thought to be alterations designed by Alfred Waterhouse in the late 19th Century. Although the grounds are obscured from public view by a boundary wall, they provide an important and valuable setting to the buildings within the university campus, to the south.’*

### 3. HERITAGE ASSETS

#### 3.1 Heritage Considerations & Assessment Criteria

Within the NPPF a heritage asset is defined as *“a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).”*

An assessment of the significance and settings of the heritage assets within the proposed site and their relationship to the site is required to determine the impact of the proposed works.

‘Significance’ for built assets can be assessed using the criteria set out in the national Statutory Listing guidance.

The NPPF defines the ‘setting’ of a heritage asset as *“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 that significance or may be neutral.”*

Our impact assessment will consider the extent to which the proposed works will result in a change within the setting of the identified assets and whether this change would be harmful to the assets identified, or would preserve their setting.

In the case of this application, the setting of the following designated heritage assets may be affected by the current proposals:

Acacias Building, London Road, RG1 5AQ - Grade II listed building  
Kendrick Road Conservation Area

The aim of this Heritage Statement is to identify and assess any impacts that the proposed works may cause to the value or significance of the heritage assets.

We will determine the impact by considering the sensitivity of the assets and the magnitude of change to its setting and overall significance. We have set out in the tables below the value of the significance of the assets along with the criteria to be used to assess the impact of the changes.

| VALUE               | EXAMPLES OF SIGNIFICANCE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| High                | <p>World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments of exceptional quality, or assets of acknowledged international importance or can contribute to international research objectives.</p> <p>Grade I and Grade II* Listed Buildings and built heritage of exceptional quality.</p> <p>Grade I and Grade II* Registered Parks and Gardens and historic landscapes and townscapes of international sensitivity, or extremely well preserved historic landscapes and townscapes with exceptional coherence, integrity, time-depth, or other critical factor(s).</p>                                                                                     |
| Good                | <p>Scheduled Monuments, or assets of national quality and importance or that can contribute to national research objectives.</p> <p>Grade II* and Grade II Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas with very strong character and integrity, other built heritage that can be shown to have exceptional qualities in their fabric or historical association.</p> <p>Grade II* and II Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields and historic landscapes and townscapes of outstanding interest, quality and importance, or well preserved and exhibiting considerable coherence, integrity time-depth or other critical factor(s).</p> |
| Medium/<br>Moderate | <p>Grade II Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Locally listed buildings and undesignated assets that can be shown to have good qualities in their fabric or historical association.</p> <p>Grade II Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields, undesignated special historic landscapes and townscapes with reasonable coherence, integrity, time-depth or other critical factor(s).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Low                 | <p>Assets compromised by poor preservation and/or poor survival of contextual associations but with potential to contribute to local research objectives.</p> <p>Historic buildings or structures of modest quality in their fabric or historical association.</p> <p>Historic landscapes and townscapes with limited sensitivity or whose sensitivity is limited by poor preservation, historic integrity and/or poor survival of contextual associations.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Negligible/<br>None | <p>Assets with no surviving cultural heritage interest. Buildings of no architectural or historical note.</p> <p>Landscapes and townscapes with no surviving legibility and/or contextual associations, or with no historic interest.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

| VALUE           | EXAMPLES OF SIGNIFICANCE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Impact          | Typical Criteria Descriptors                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Very High       | <p><b>Negative:</b> Impacts will destroy cultural heritage assets resulting in their total loss or almost complete destruction.</p> <p><b>Positive:</b> The proposals would remove or successfully mitigate existing and significant damaging and discordant impacts on assets; allow for the substantial restoration or enhancement of characteristic features.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| High            | <p><b>Negative:</b> Impacts will damage cultural heritage assets; result in the loss of the asset's quality and integrity; cause severe damage to key characteristic features or elements; almost complete loss of setting and/or context of the asset. The assets integrity or setting is almost wholly destroyed or is severely compromised, such that the resource can no longer be appreciated or understood.</p> <p><b>Positive:</b> The proposals would remove or successfully mitigate existing damaging and discordant impacts on assets; allow for the restoration or enhancement of characteristic features; allow the substantial re-establishment of the integrity, understanding and setting for an area or group of features; halt rapid degradation and/or erosion of the heritage resource, safeguarding substantial elements of the heritage resource.</p> |
| Medium          | <p><b>Negative:</b> Moderate impact on the asset, but only partially affecting the integrity; partial loss of, or damage to, key characteristics, features or elements; substantially intrusive into the setting and/or would adversely impact upon the context of the asset; loss of the asset for community appreciation. The assets integrity or setting is damaged but not destroyed so understanding and appreciation is compromised.</p> <p><b>Positive:</b> Benefit to, or partial restoration of, key characteristics, features or elements; improvement of asset quality; degradation of the asset would be halted; the setting and/or context of the asset would be enhanced and understanding and appreciation is substantially improved; the asset would be brought into community use.</p>                                                                     |
| Low             | <p><b>Negative:</b> Some measurable change in assets quality or vulnerability; minor loss of or alteration to, one (or maybe more) key characteristics, features or elements; change to the setting would not be overly intrusive or overly diminish the context; community use or understanding would be reduced. The assets integrity or setting is damaged but understanding and appreciation would only be diminished not compromised.</p> <p><b>Positive:</b> Minor benefit to, or partial restoration of, one (maybe more) key characteristics, features or elements; some beneficial impact on asset or a stabilisation of negative impacts; slight improvements to the context or setting of the site; community use or understanding and appreciation would be enhanced.</p>                                                                                       |
| Negligible/ Nil | No discernible change in baseline conditions.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

### 3.2 Kendrick Road Conservation Area

The Kendrick Road Conservation Area features a number of historic buildings characteristic of the late 18th century, the 19th century and the inter-war years. The history of the area is as follows;

**Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century** – Significant expansion and growth of Reading as a result of thriving industrial sector and rail links with London. Reading became known for light bulb production, breweries and biscuit making. Huntley & Palmers were a significant source of local employment.

**Mid/Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century** – Opening of Kendrick School furthers the educational importance of the area. Boundaries of Reading were expanded in the late 1800s due to an ever increasing population. The Acacias building was purchased by George Palmer in 1865.

**20<sup>th</sup> Century** - London Road Campus gifted to University of Reading by the Palmer Family of local biscuit manufacturer Huntley & Palmer in 1904. The site was the main University campus until 1947.

**21<sup>st</sup> Century** – Character Appraisal and subsequent designation of the Kendrick Road Conservation Area circa 2005.

**Today** – The London Road campus has been subject to several recent renovations, including recent external repairs and refurbishment of educational buildings and creation of new within the London Road Campus.

### 3.3 Acacias Building – Grade II Listed

#### 3.3.1. Listing Details

The following provides the current Statutory List description for the asset;

***Statutory List Description***

***Grade: II***

***Date first listed: 14-Dec-1978***

***List entry Number: 1113511***

***LONDON ROAD 1. 5128 (South Side) No 44 (The Acacias) and Railings to street SU 7272 9/162 II GV 2.***

*Before 1840 (shewn on Weller map). A detached 2 storey and basement villa of Bath stone with hipped slate roof. Moulded eaves cornice. 3 windows 1st floor, 2 on ground floor, glazing bar sashes with flanking full height pilaster strips. Central door with segmental patterned fanlight. Plain Greek Doric porch on stone steps. East return has 2 ground floor bows which have been attributed to Waterhouse as alterations for William Isaac Palmer (of Huntley and Palmers) who lived there - one has stairs to basement. Good conservatory at rear with an extensive rockery. Linked to Greenbank by 3+3 window 3 storey extension with 2 storey pavilion to right. The interior has a number of reeded features (front door surround, ground floor back room fireplace etc). Excellent contemporary ironwork to street - spearhead railings box panel standards and double gates.*

### 3.3.2. Assessment of Significance – Acacias Building

The Acacias building dates back to the mid-1800s and is likely to have been developed in the mid-1800s prior to purchase by George Palmer of the Huntley & Palmer biscuit manufacturer. The building is constructed from solid brickwork walls, with ashlar clad external walls throughout. Dentil cornices are present at eaves level below slate covered pitched roofs and large curved bay windows are located to the east elevation.



*North Elevation*



*South Elevation*



*East Elevation*

Photos show the Acacias building and surrounding landscape. Key features include Bath stone ashlar cladding throughout and curved bay windows to the East elevation.

The property is subject to a Grade II listing and is located within a conservation area. This property forms an historic record of the development of Reading and is of significant local importance given links to the University and the Palmer family. The significance of this heritage asset is considered to be **Medium**.

### 3.3.3. Assessment of Significance – Kendrick Road Conservation Area

Extract taken from Kendrick Road Conservation Area Character Appraisal;

*The specific interest that justifies designation of the Kendrick Road Conservation Area derives from:*

- The architectural and historic interest of the area's buildings, including twelve grade II and two grade II\* listed buildings;*

- *The diversity of the area's architecture which includes notable exemplars of housing from the late 18th century to the early 20th century;*
- *The architectural quality and coherence of late Victorian and Edwardian dwellings in Kendrick Road and Redlands Road;*
- *The historic interest of Kendrick Road, a planned mid-19th century urban road, designed as a tree lined avenue aligning with the spire of Christ Church;*
- *The early 20th century planned campus of the University of Reading, the only university established between the two World Wars;*
- *The architectural interest of Kendrick Court, an unusual 1930s housing estate;*
- *The open space, trees and garden surrounding The Great Hall, still in use for University of Reading graduation ceremonies;*
- *The area's mature trees and, in particular, the fine avenue of plane trees along Kendrick Road;*
- *Historical associations with the Palmer family of Huntley and Palmer, famous Reading biscuit manufacturers, and with the author Mary Russell Mitford (1787 -1855).*
- *Notable red brick boundary walls and historic iron railings.*

Due to its historic associations, examples of different residential dwellings and strong ties with local educational institutions, the significance of the Conservation Area is considered to be **Medium**.

## 4. PROPOSED SCHEME

The proposed works are to replace the main pitched and subsidiary roofs at second storey level. Stonework repairs to external walls are also proposed to improve the water-tightness of the building.

The existing roof is in poor condition and has reached the end of its usable life. A significant number of slates are slipped or broken and leadwork is deteriorated throughout. Stonework cladding is deteriorated throughout, with spalling, cracks and loose areas posing a significant safety risk.

The proposed works will include:

- Careful strip out and replacement of deteriorated natural slate roof coverings and replacement of deteriorated timber structural members.
- Sympathetic brickwork repairs and repointing to three chimney stacks.
- Replacement of heavily corroded rainwater goods to match the appearance of the adjacent Greenbank building.
- Sympathetic repairs to deteriorated ashlar Bath stone cladding panels.
- Replacement of rotten and decayed sections of timber boxed eaves.
- Replacement of deteriorated timber framed rooflights and slate clad studwork structure at roof level.
- Internal fire compartmentation upgrades to reduce the spread of flame in case of fire.

The proposed works are considered essential to maintain the fabric of the building and reduce the risk of ongoing water ingress. Tenders for the works are to be sought from University approved framework contractors. The successful contractor will be required to demonstrate a history of carrying out similar projects to Grade II listed buildings. Quality assessment at tender stage will ensure that the works are undertaken by competent personnel and ensure the works are completed to a professional standard.

Drawings relating to the proposed works are included within the application.

## 5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

### 5.1 Acacias Building, - Grade II Listed

The proposed works to the Acacias will be undertaken professionally and in line with current good practice to ensure that replacement roof coverings and stonework repairs are carried out correctly and with consideration of minimising damage to the existing structure. The proposals include sympathetic repairs to the appearance of the existing stonework and to maintaining existing decorative architectural details.

Proposed materials generally match the existing, however proposed rainwater goods will match the recent replacement carried out at the adjacent Greenbanks building.

Internally, the extent of works is to provide additional thermal insulation and to provide an additional layer of plasterboard to improve fire resistant characteristics.

The works to be undertaken will include;

- Careful removal and replacement of existing pitched roof coverings and associated leadwork. The proposed pitched roof covering is a natural Penrhyn slate. Stainless steel mechanical fixings will be specified to minimise vibration and damage to existing internal finishes.
- Repair and replacement of deteriorated roof timbers. Where feasible, original timber members are to be retained and splice repairs carried out to deteriorated rafter-ends.
- Like for like replacement of existing flat roofs. Thermal insulation to the flat roof will be increased to improve the thermal comfort of the resident. Insulation upgrades will not affect the ridge height or pitch of any section of the roof. This conscious decision has been made to preserve the existing height difference between East wing and West wing roofs.
- Reforming timber framed dormer windows and casement windows to the East elevation.
- Timber repairs and replacement of decayed sections of boxed eaves. Redecoration with external grade gloss paint to match the appearance of the existing.
- Replacement of existing ogee profiled gutters and round downpipes with a powder-coated aluminium alternative. New sections of gutter are also to be ogee profiled.
- Sympathetic repair and replacement of deteriorated stonework facings. A stonework specialist has been consulted to recommend the most appropriate repair methods and materials. Works on-site will be carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the stonework consultant and in accordance with an agreed scope of works.

Based on the above criteria, we consider the impact of the proposed works on Acacias to be **low impact**.

## 5.2 Kendrick Road Conservation Area

Based on the above criteria the proposed works are considered to have a **negligible impact** on the Kendrick Road Conservation Area. We consider that the proposed works will not have a significant impact on the appearance of the wider surrounding area.

## 6. SUMMARY

The proposed works are the replacement of roof coverings, rainwater goods and repairs to external stonework cladding. Internal works are limited to timber repairs, thermal insulation and fire resistance upgrades.

The intention is to improve the water tightness and thermal performance of the building to improve the internal environment and reduce energy wastage. Roof replacement and stonework repairs will improve the appearance of the building, with sympathetic repairs to match the existing roof covering and stonework. The proposed works will reduce the requirement for ongoing local repairs and maintenance over in decades to come, reducing the likelihood of water ingress.

Based on the proposed installation and method of works we consider the works will have a **low impact**.

We consider that the proposed works will not cause harm to the existing asset or the setting and therefore preserve the existing buildings in accordance with Section 16 (2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 along with preserving the Kendrick Road Conservation Area in accordance with Section 72(1).

