

Heritage Statement

This Heritage Statement supports a planning application and application for Listed Building Consent for the change of use of 24 Queen Victoria Street, Reading, to flexible A1/A2/ A3 use.

History, Character and Significance

The unit is located at 24 Queen Victoria Street, and is part of a grouping of heritage assets at 1 – 31 Queen Victoria Street.

The property is within the central area of Reading, where a number of the surrounding properties are Grade II Listed Buildings. The design of the buildings reflects that of a “traditional main shopping street.”

Listing description

The properties were listed in 1978 as a possible example of the work of architect Joseph Morris. The buildings were designed to form a commercial street to include a ground floor shopfront.

The reason for the listing of the property is in its architectural merit:

“Dutch gabled free Baroque style, 3 ½ storeys, yellow brick and terracotta with dividing Ionic pilasters, Dentil cornice, Pilasters to dormers, broken pediments above. An elongated pattern of shallow bays to 1st and 2nd floor 4:1:1:1:1:3m mullion and transom window to bays, sashes with architraves (and pediments on 1st floor) to rest.”

The listing description notes that the area grew out of the 19th Century redevelopment of Reading, following the advent of Reading Abbey. Queen Victoria Street now lies within the commercial heart of the town. The properties themselves are built to the back edge of the pavement, believed to be reflective of existing street patterns. Their architecture includes a traditional “shopfront”.

Conservation Area considerations

The unit is not within a Conservation Area. The Market Place/ London Street Conservation is approximately 200m west, separated from the unit by Reading County Court and properties along Cross Street.

The Conservation Area Appraisal makes no reference to the unit. Moreover, a potential extension of the conservation area was rejected by the council on the basis it would “create an unwieldy conservation area lacking in overall cohesion”.

Proposed Development

The proposed change of use requires only minor internal alterations; such as the removal of existing shop fittings. These will be undertaken with careful consideration for the listed building and associated architectural features.

No external alterations are proposed as part of this submission. However, they may be necessary on the re-occupation of the unit at which point separate consents will be sought.

Impact on the heritage asset

The significance of the heritage asset relates to its architectural interest. The proposed works relate to internal alterations only and have no effect on the external appearance (i.e. the areas of architectural interest). The works will not affect the setting of the heritage asset.

Re-occupation will retain the unit in active and viable use. This will bring economic and environmental benefits to Reading town centre, including supporting town centre vitality and viability and economic growth. The proposed use of the building is appropriate within the commercial context.

The internal alterations including the removal of the existing shop fittings will contribute to the long-term upkeep of the building. The proposal will ensure that any key architectural features that contribute to the significance of the heritage asset are retained.

The unit includes a traditional shopfront which will be retained. The change of use will respect the listed building's character and appearance and will serve to preserve, restore and complement its features of special architectural and historic interest.

The maintenance of the asset as a result of re-occupation will result in the long term investment and management of the unit.

Summary

The proposed works include minor internal alterations only; the frontage will be retained as existing. The proposal will not impact on the value of the heritage asset nor will the proposed development create a negative setting for the surrounding listed buildings.

The proposal will not harm the Grade II Listed Building or its setting. It will protect the significance of the heritage asset and surrounding character.

The proposed change of use is in accordance with both national and local policy and denotes sustainable development. Planning permission and listed building consent should therefore be considered favourably.