

To: **Planning, Reading Borough Council**

From: **Nairita Chakraborty, Built Heritage & Townscape Consultant**

Date: **28th March 2024**

Title: **Proposed Sec 73 amendments to 148-145 Friar Street & 1-15 Queen Victoria Street, Reading RG1 1EX**

1. This note has been prepared on behalf of Thackeray Estates Reading City Ltd ("the Client") and is intended to accompany the Section 73 application of material amendment to the consented scheme [Ref: 221235/ 221233] and a corresponding Listed Building Consent for the amended scheme.
2. The Site benefits from previous permissions and Revive and Tailor have been working with the applicants and architects throughout. The proposed alterations mainly relate to internal reconfiguration of the layouts and a reduction to the mass of the extension of 145-146 Friar Street, including some modest external changes.

Consented Scheme

3. The Site originally had an approval [Ref: 210223/ 210224] for a mixed use development comprising of 3308 sqm retail spaces, an apart hotel, and a new public market square. Since this permission was granted, the Client subsequently acquired Nos 145-146 Friar Street. allowing a more comprehensively delivery of the proposal. A further application was approved [Ref: 221235, 24th May 2023] for the following:
 - Demolition of No's 138-141 & 142-143 Friar St, partial demolition of No. 144 Friar St and erection of ground, mezzanine and 1st to 6th floor (7 storey) hotel building with 163 bedspaces (Class C1), with ancillary ground floor lounge, bar and restaurant and associated works.
4. The current Section 73 application is for further amendments, mainly relating to the internal layout, in so far as they relate to the listed buildings and new entrance.

Heritage Assets and Summary of their Significance

5. A detailed assessment of heritage assets identified as part of the consented scheme has already been provided within the accompanying heritage statement. As such, this is not repeated here. The heritage assets likely to be impacted on through the amended scheme are:
 - 1-15 Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friar Street [part of a wider grade II designation which includes: 1-31 and 2-32 Queen Victoria Street; 148, 149 and 150 Friar Street; and 24-28 and 35-38 Broad Street.]
6. The Queen Victoria Street terrace (including 148 Friar Street and 1-15 Queen Victoria Street) is a building of considerable architectural quality, primarily deriving from the quality and form of its front elevation which includes brickwork, terracotta, decorative gables, granite pilasters and original windows. While its significance has been affected by virtue of poor quality shopfronts, the building remains a good example of an early 20th century commercial premises and this bestows a degree of historic (illustrative and associative) interest.
7. Internally, the listed buildings have been heavily altered with all partitions being late 20th century in date associated with the office use on the upper floors and retail fitouts on the ground floors of the buildings. The interiors of this part of the terrace are of no particular heritage value.
8. The shop front units, internally, have also been altered with the frontage of the shop fronts being the key element of the architectural interest of the building.
9. The significance of 147 Friar Street primarily relates to the architectural quality of the 1880s front elevation, particularly the double height colonnade shopfront and the 3no. segmental headed dormer windows that feature moulded coping between and modillion cornices. As with the Queen Victoria Street terrace, the building is a good example of a late 19th century commercial premises albeit heavily altered internally.
10. In both cases, the primary interest of the building relates to its frontage as the interior has been heavily altered at various phases and is now in a deteriorating condition.
11. The built form to the rear has been removed in accordance with the approved planning permission and listed building consent.

Proposed amendments and their impact on heritage assets

12. As described earlier, the proposal (for the purposes of this assessment) relates mainly to internal reconfiguration of layouts to allow for efficiency and standards.
13. These are listed as follows:

Ground floor

- changes to the Queen Victoria Street Class E units - the quantum of floorspace will remain the same with a modest reduction in number of units to provide more units desired by the market (existing has four and reduced to three).
- Friar Street Class E units will be increased in size to provide more floorspace.
- Changes to the apart hotel lobby and all public access will be from QVS.

First, second and third floors

- Improved efficiency of this floor including changes to the stairs, lift core, increase in number of rooms but reduction in built form to rear of No.146 and 11-15 Queen Victoria Street.

Fourth floor

- Improved efficiency of this floor including changes to the stairs, lift core, increase in number of rooms but reduction in built form to rear of No.146 and dormers to Nos.145-147.

Roof plan

- Changes to take account of modest massing changes, but plant zone to remain same.

Basement

- Modest change to No.146 basement to take account of improved lift and stair core.

14. Along Queen Victoria Street, the existing configuration of the shops is four retail units and would be changed to create three units to suit the needs of the future occupants. A new entrance door to the Apart Hotel would also be added, in order to provide access from the street. However, the external rhythm of the shop front, alongside the new entrance door, would be maintained with the retention of the related pilasters.
15. The changes to the internal fabric would only relate to the removal of existing modern detailing and fit outs which would have no impact on the heritage significance of the building. There are some modest new openings, but this would not lead to loss of any fabric of interest. As such the resulting changes would have no impact to the contribution made by the shop fronts and their proportions to the overall significance of the listed building.
16. Along Friar Street, the retail unit floor space would be increased, and the modern shopfront would be replaced. Given that this has already been replaced in the past, there would be no impact on the significance of the building.

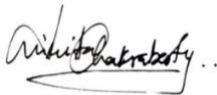
17. Other alterations include an improved floor layout, to facilitate efficient use of space, including changes to the stairs, lift core. Whilst this would result in an increase in number of rooms, the overall built form to the rear would be reduced resulting in enhancement.
18. The proposed dormers to No 146 Friar Street would be brought slightly forward due to the proposed changes to the roof. However, this would be only a slight variation and there would be no impact on the setting of the adjacent listed buildings.
19. The extensions to the rear of 145 and 146 Friar Street would be reduced at third and roof level, these changes would be a modest benefit to the setting of the listed buildings.

Summary

20. Along Queen Victoria Street, the existing configuration of the shops is four retail units and would be changed to create three units to suit the needs of the future occupants with minimal internal changes. Where modest limited openings are created nibs and piers would be retained to aid revertability and the openings would be kept to a minimum within the heritage footprint. A new entrance door to the Apart Hotel would also be added, in order to provide access from the street. However, the external rhythm of the shop front, alongside the new entrance door, would be maintained with the retention of the related pilasters.
21. The new entrance to the Hotel would follow the established rhythm of the shop fronts and blend seemingly with the streetscape, causing no harm to the significance of the buildings.
22. Changes to the layout of the buildings will increase the efficiency of space while the reduction in mass to the rear would be a benefit.
23. The proposal would continue to deliver the following enhancements to Reading town centre:
 - The proposal would provide a comprehensive redevelopment of the site to provide a high quality commercial and visitor accommodation use that will reinvigorate a series of currently underused heritage assets within Reading town centre.
 - Continued investment and restoration of 1-15 Queen Victoria Street and 147-148 Friar Street and their highly significant frontage;
 - Reviving the currently underused buildings within the immediate setting of the listed buildings by providing an active and comprehensive viable use that will see for their future conservation and maintenance; and,
 - Reinstatement of appropriate shopfronts throughout the site, thus enhancing the street frontages and thereby the setting of the listed buildings.

24. Prior to the submission of the application, the proposal was discussed with the Council Officers as part of pre-application engagement. Given that the proposal would not result in any harm to heritage assets, Paragraph 208 of the NPPF would not be applicable. The high quality design and optimisation of the heritage assets will be considered in line with the requirements of local and national planning policies.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nairita Chakraborty', with a horizontal line underneath.

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