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WALSINGHAM PLANNING

SPECIALIST PLANNING & HERITAGE CONSULTANTS

Heritage Statement

The Narrowboat, Blakes Lock, Reading,
RG1 3EQ

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I INTRODUCTION

- I.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Walsingham Planning, Planning and Heritage Consultants, to support an application for full planning permission for a temporary change of use at the Narrowboat public house, Blakes Lock, Reading to a kitchen training facility for Fullers staff for a period of up to 5 years.
- I.2 The Narrowboat public house incorporates part of the Grade II listed former engine house of the Blakes Lock Sewage Pumping Station (NHLE: 1248683) within its footprint. In accordance with paragraph 200 of the NPPF and to comply with the validation requirements of Reading Borough Council, this Heritage Statement provides a proportionate description of the significance of the listed building to enable an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed temporary change of use upon this significance.

Location and Site Description

- I.3 The Narrowboat is located to the south of Gas Works Road, on the north bank of the River Kennet to the northeast of the centre of Reading.
- I.4 The public house incorporates the southwest range of the former engine house within its accommodation. The main trading area of the public house is accommodated within a later addition adjoining the engine house to the southwest and is linked to the listed building by a low, two-storey range which is gabled to the southeast and which has the existing kitchen extract and intake equipment fitted to the northwest. The main range of the later addition is taller but also extends to two-storeys in height and has red brick and timber clad external elevations and metal sheet roof covering.
- I.5 The listed building is easily distinct from the later addition; to the southeast frontage facing the river, the building presents a tall gabled elevation of red brick with contrasting dark grey work dressing and banding. To the ground floor is an arcade of three bays with each defined by plain brick piers carrying segmental arches. To the centre bay are double-leaf doors with the outer bays containing modern timber casement windows. The doors and flanking windows are set under cast iron top lights with radial bars. Positioned centrally above within the gable apex is a large sexfoil window with coloured lights, stone frame and decorative red and grey brick dressings. The gable is defined with decorative red brick corbel tables to the eaves with saw tooth brick coggings to the verges.

- I.6 The adjoining block to the right to the gable does not form part of the Narrowboat accommodation and is not included within the red line boundary of the application. This block is of matching gothic style with matching corbel table and decorative brickwork to the eaves and verges and smaller, cinquefoil window.
- I.7 To the east and northeast are the Grade II listed Screens House (NHLE: 1113618) and pump and turbine house (NHLE: 1321867) both of which formed part of the Blakes Lock Sewage Pumping works, and which are contemporary in origin and design aesthetic as the former engine house.
- I.8 To the southwest and west of the Narrowboat is a large car park area which serves the public house and restaurant and the museum.
- I.9 Land uses within the immediate vicinity of the pub are typically residential and comprise multi-storey apartment blocks.

2 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Assets

- 2.1 As above, the Narrowboat incorporates part of the Grade II listed former Blakes Lock Sewage Pumping Works engine house within its footprint with the internal space most recently used as seating with a office at mezzanine level.
- 2.2 Designated heritage assets within the vicinity of the Narrowboat include the following:
- The Pump and Turbine House (NHLE: 1321867) – A Grade II listed building formerly associated with the Blake Lock Sewage Pumping Works.
 - Screens House (NHLE: 11113618) – A Grade II listed building formerly associated with the Blake Lock Sewage Pumping Works.
- 2.3 In view of the nature of the proposal which seeks a temporary change of use of the building only, and in view of the existing established use and physical arrangement of the buildings, it is considered that the pump and turbine house and the Screens House would not experience any changes to their settings as a consequence of the works and as such their significance would not be impacted. Therefore, this assessment only considers the former engine house only.

Assessment Methodology

- 2.4 The NPPF stipulates that a description of the significance of an asset potentially affected by the proposed development should be provided in order to satisfy the requirements of the NPPF.
- 2.5 The significance of a heritage asset is defined within the NPPF as *‘the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. This interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic, or historic.’* The NPPF also notes that *‘Elements of 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’* (DLUHC 2023, Annex 2 page:75).

Grade II listed Former Engine House

- 2.6 The description provided below is in proportion with the scale and nature of the works proposed in order to determine the impact of the proposed works to the heritage significance of the building.

Historic Interest

- 2.7 The engine house holds historic interest as part of the former Blakes Lock Sewage Pumping Works and is illustrative of the type of buildings being designed and constructed in the mid to late 19th century to address public health problems as the result of rapidly growing populations in urban areas and the rise of poor housing driven by the Industrial Revolution.
- 2.8 Built in 1870, the engine house formed part of a large complex of purpose designed buildings to assist in transferring sewage away from the town. The buildings were intentionally sited adjacent to the river where the pumps used in the works were powered by the flow of the water over the Blakes Lock Weir.
- 2.9 The original engine house was 'T' shape in plan with the left block, now incorporated into the public house originally housing the boilers, whilst the adjacent right block accommodated the steam engines; the original footprint is shown on Map 1, Appendix 1.
- 2.10 The building was subject to extension in the late 19th century with an addition added to the northeast A chimney, now demolished, was added to the northwest. This is visible in aerial images of the pumping station from the mid-19th century¹.
- 2.11 The building in its typology offers evidence of the innovative engineering solution being developed and employed to manage sewerage and water quality within 19th century urban centres.

Architectural Interest

- 2.12 The engine house derives architectural interest from its free gothic architectural style. Whilst the building was a functional, purpose-built structure the detailing and decoration employed within the external appearance is elaborate and high-quality which is reflective of the civic pride which Victorian society placed upon such municipal buildings.
- 2.13 The gothic style is expressed through the combined use of multi-coloured brickwork dressings and banding, the gabled elevations enhanced with brick corbel tables and saw tooth cogging,

¹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/collections/aerial-photos/record/EPW022682>

sexfoil and cinquefoil windows, lancet windows and the gothic style doorway to the right block which has steeply pitched surround.

- 2.14 Internally, the left block retains its original scale and sense of openness with exposed metal trusses to the underside of the roof.

Setting

- 2.15 The engine house is judged to derive significance from the following aspects of its setting:
- Positioning in respect to the River Kennet – The position adjacent to the river was historically important in powering the works. Today, this position adds to the aesthetic quality of the building and its experience as part of a distinct group.
 - Grouping with the adjacent Grade II listed Screens House and pump and turbine houses – The shared architectural language and physical positioning of the three buildings evidences their shared historic function and contemporaneous construction and ownership. The distinctive architectural style of the buildings imparts a deliberate aesthetic quality illustrating the historic pride given to such buildings and their innovative purpose.

3 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Methodology

- 3.1 The NPPF (2023) stipulates two levels of potential adverse impact to the significance of designated heritage assets. The NPPF references these as:
- Substantial harm.
 - Less than substantial harm.
- 3.2 It should also be noted that some works will result in no harm to heritage significance, having a neutral effect or could benefit heritage significance helping to better reveal or understanding special interest.

The proposals

- 3.3 The proposed works seek a change of use of the building on a temporary basis to accommodate a kitchen training facility for new and existing chefs within the Fullers business and to teach them additional skills used in cooking particular dishes.
- 3.4 The proposed kitchen training facility will only be used for a maximum of 11 members of staff at any one time. This is not envisaged to be a course led facility which is structured around terms. The facility will be used on an ad hoc basis based on the needs of the wider business.
- 3.5 No physical alterations to historic building fabric are currently proposed as part of the change of use.

Assessment

- 3.6 The most recent use of the building as a pub and restaurant is not the original intended use. Using part of the listed building for a training kitchen would not therefore result in the loss of the original use.
- 3.7 No physical alterations to historic fabric are currently proposed and no direct impact to the building would result.
- 3.8 The remaining physical features from which the building derives significance, including its riverside setting and distinctive visual and physical relationship with the contemporary and architecturally coherent Screens House and pump and turbine house building, would be

conserved and the original design intent and industrial character of the building would not be affected.

- 3.9 It is therefore judged that the proposed change of use would have a neutral effect on the significance of the Grade II listed former engine house.

4 ASSESSMENT AGAINST PLANNING POLICY

National Policy

- 4.1 Relevant national planning policy is presented within chapter 16 of the NPPF.
- 4.2 In accordance with paragraph 200 this assessment has provided a description of the significance of the Engine House at the former Blake Lock Sewage Pumping Works, a designated heritage asset.
- 4.3 Paragraphs 206 – 208 of the NPPF concern potential effects to the significance of designated heritage assets. The assessment has found that the proposal would have a neutral effect upon the significance of the Grade II listed former engine house. As such paragraphs 206 – 208 would not be engaged.

Local Planning Policy

- 4.4 Relevant local planning policy is presented within the Reading Local Plan.
- 4.5 Policy EN1 – Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment is relevant in considering the proposal. This policy states that proposed which affect listed building shall not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest, including their setting. The proposed temporary change of use has been assessed to have a neutral effect upon the significance of the listed building which the key features of special historic and architectural held by the building, and the aspects of its setting from which it derives significance, being conserved. As such the proposal is judged to be compliance with Policy EN1.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared with due respect to the NPPF and has considered potential effects upon the significance of the Narrowboat public house, which incorporates part of the Grade II listed former engine house of the Blakes Lock Sewage Pumping Works within its footprint, from a proposed temporary change of use to a kitchen training facility.
- 5.2 The proposals have been assessed to cause no harm to the significance of the listed building having a neutral effect with the key features which provide the building with its special interest, including its setting, conserved by the works.
- 5.3 The proposal is therefore judged to be in compliance with national and local heritage planning policy requirements.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Historic Mapping

Appendix 2: Plates

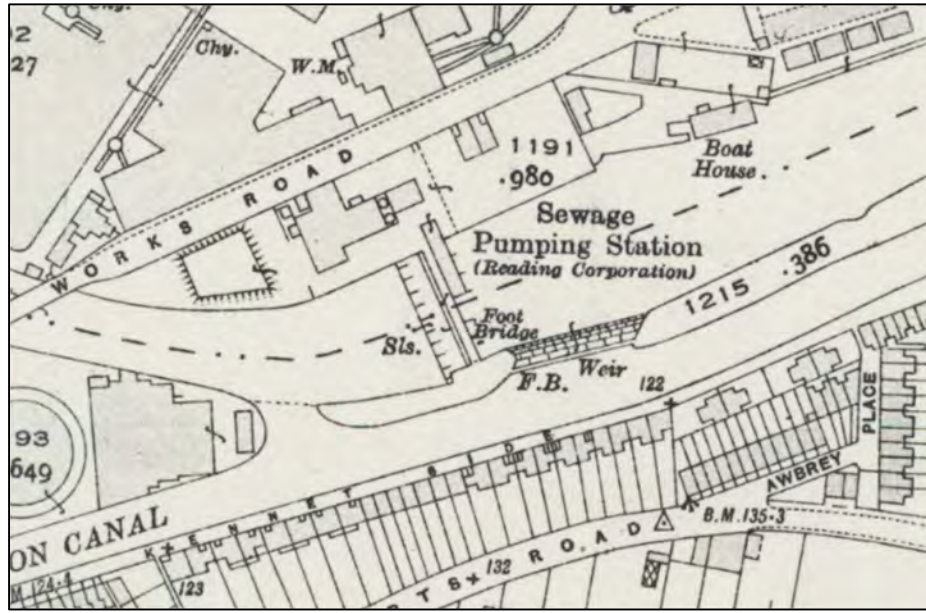
APPENDIX I: HISTORIC MAPPING



Map 1 – Extract of the 1877 (published 1879) Ordnance Survey Town Plan for Reading (Berkshire XXXVII.3.10) (Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland).



Map 2 – Extract of the 1898 (published 1900) Ordnance Survey Map (Berkshire XXXVII.3) (Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland).



Map 3 – Extract of the 1931 (published 1934) Ordnance Survey Map (Berkshire XXXVII.3) (Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland).

APPENDIX 2: PLATES



Plate 1 – Left (southwest) block of the Grade II listed former engine house.



Plate 2 – Right (northeast) block of the Grade II listed former engine house.



Plate 3 – Later, additions to the southwest which accommodate the majority of the pub and restaurant.



Plate 4 – Adjacent Grade II listed Screens House (left) and pump and turbine house (right).



Plate 5 – Metal roof trusses and mechanism retained to the interior.



Plate 6 – View through the interior of the building.



Plate 7 – Mezzanine enclosure to northeast wall of the building.



Plate 8 – Rear, northwest elevation onto Gas Works Road; gable end of the former engine house visible to the left of the image.