

DAVIS PLANNING LTD

Chartered Town Planners

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

104 London Street, Reading, RG1 4SJ

Introduction

This Heritage Statement is submitted in support of an application for Listed Building Consent by Beenlore Ltd for internal and external works associated with the re-use of the property for a small HMO. A planning application has already been lodged with the Council for a change of use (ref.240699).

The building is Grade II listed and this proposal focuses on the alterations and new build structures required in connection with the existing planning permission, namely:

- i) Construction of a timber cycle store to the rear of the building;
- ii) Re-instatement of a door opening between the current HMO/office and the existing one bedroom flat;
- iii) Removal and making good of two existing doors within the existing one bedroom flat;
- iv) Installation of new matching door into the common lounge area.

This statement will set out how the proposed alterations are necessary for the planning application to be implemented. In addition, it will also demonstrate that the alterations are consistent with local and national policy including the preservation of the conservation area and the buildings special historic interest.

Site and surroundings

The application site comprises a three-storey building located within a long terrace comprising of buildings of varying ages and designs. The building is Grade II listed and is within the Market Place / London Road Conservation Area. It is currently in use as offices, with a self-contained one-bedroom flat on the ground floor at the rear of the building. The existing flat has its own access onto St Giles Close to the rear. The existing offices are accessed from London Street and have no access to the rear space.

The surrounding area comprises mainly of three storey terraces, with many of the buildings being statutorily listed. The area comprises of a mix of uses, including ground floor commercial uses and residential houses and flats.

Relevant Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

Paragraph 203 states that in determining applications, LPA's should take account of:

- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic viability; and
- The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraph 205 of the Framework 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 weight should be. This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting.

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

Policy EN1 – Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment. Historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be permitted and where possible enhanced. All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Proposals should avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits.

Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings.

Policy EN3 – Enhancement of Conservation Areas. The special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced. Development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character and conservation areas.

Heritage Assessment

The existing building dates from 1820. It has a narrow rectangular form on plan, orientated east/west with its principal elevation facing London Street. It is constructed in red brick in Flemish bond with stone and composite stone dressings. The rear elevation is grey brick with red brick dressings. The windows opening hold sash frames. The hipped roof is covered with plain tiles and there are two ridge stacks.

The architectural interest of the building is as an early C19 building which contributes to the character of an architecturally varied historic streetscape which forms part of the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area. Its historic interest is as part of the urban development of Reading's ancient core. The building also has group value, being in close proximity to a large number of listed buildings and forms part of a strong historic grouping.

The proposal is for the following alterations:

- v) Construction of a timber cycle store to the rear of the building;
- vi) Re-instatement of a door opening between the current HMO/office and the existing one bedroom flat;
- vii) Removal and making good of two existing doors within the existing one bedroom flat;
- viii) Installation of new matching door into the proposed common lounge.

In respect of the timber cycle store, this will be a modest structure located to the rear of the existing flat. In between the store and the rear elevation, a small area for wheelie bin storage is proposed.

The two proposed paneled doors are indicated on plan ref.04B with a more detailed plan including elevations and sections on plan 05. The timber doors will match those already prevalent within the building.

Where the removal of existing doors requires making good, this will be carried out in matching plasterwork to the remainder of the building.

Having regard to the modest nature of the above alterations, the proposed change of use would not result in any harm to the significance of the listed building and would preserve the character or appearance of the CA. There are no changes proposed to the external fabric of the building. As there is no material harm it is not necessary to consider any public benefits.

The proposal complies with LP Policies EN1, EN3 and CC7 and the design/heritage objectives of the NPPF