



RIDGEWAY
HERITAGE CONSULTANCY

No. 7 BLAGRAVE STREET, READING RG1 1PJ

A Heritage Statement



Client: Lotus Properties

Project No: RHC 2024-31

Date: 11/09/2024

No. 7 Blagrove Street, Reading RG1 2HF

A Heritage Statement

RHC Project No. 2024-31

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Front Cover: View, looking north-west along Blagrove Street, with the front elevation of No. 7 and adjoining Nos. 9-15.

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SUMMARY

No. 7 Blagrove Street, Reading is a two-storey building of late nineteenth-century date, which is locally-listed, in view of the architectural interest of its distinctive street frontage. The building interior has been considerably altered, and retains little heritage value, so that the significance of No. 7 relates almost entirely to its ornate street frontage.

It is proposed to add three additional floors of modern design, but to retain the existing street frontage *in situ*. The upper, glazed levels of the new building are proposed to be progressively stepped-back from the line of the street frontage, to limit the visibility of new construction in inward views, and to emphasise the value of the retained façade. The proposed redevelopment of No. 7 will entail the demolition of rear elements of the building which are of relatively little heritage value, and the retention of the ornate street frontage which overwhelmingly embodies the principal significance of the building.

The effects of the proposed redevelopment of No. 7 Blagrove Street on the settings of individual elements of the imposing, late nineteenth-century Town Hall complex have been assessed. These include the Grade II*-listed Town Hall, designed by Waterhouse, and adjacent Grade II-listed Museum and Concert Hall. The retention *in situ* of the existing street frontage of No. 7 would considerably limit effects on neighbouring heritage settings, and would preserve much of the existing character of this side of Blagrove Street, which includes a mix of architectural styles. The stepping-back of the upper levels of the three additional floors would limit their visibility and any perceptions of massing within inward views.

The setting of the Grade II-listed Museum would potentially be the most affected, although the overall impact would be slight, and any resulting harm would be within the lower range of less than substantial. Visual connections between No. 7 and the other two listed buildings of the Town Hall complex are more oblique, and at greater distance, which would considerably limit the visibility of the upper storeys of the proposed new building, these two buildings. No other heritage settings would be affected by the proposed redevelopment of No. 7 Blagrove Street and the overall effect on this part of the Conservation Area would be slight. There would be no harm to heritage settings, and the design of the proposed development would enhance and repair the street scene. This is currently the only building of two storeys on the street frontage, while others are all of four or five storeys. This heritage statement will support new design proposals for the new building at No. 7 Blagrove Street, which have been revised in the light of previous objections by the local planning authority.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In July, 2024, Ridgeway Heritage Consultancy was commissioned by ET Planning, on behalf of Lotus Properties, to prepare a revised Heritage Statement to support a planning application for the redevelopment on No. 7 Blagrove Street Reading RG1 1PJ (NGR 471628 173623) (Figs. 1, 2 and 3). It is proposed to demolish the property while retaining the façade of the street frontage, and to construct a new four-storey residential development of modern design behind this. This Heritage Statement report will support and inform a further planning application for this proposed redevelopment.



Fig. 1: View, looking north-west, of the western side of Blagrove Street, with No. 7 (centre) and surrounding buildings.

- 1.2 No. 7 Blagrove Street is situated within Reading town centre, on the western side of the street, and 180m north-east of the Market Place (Fig. 2). It is a characterful building of two storeys, and of late nineteenth-century date. The ground-floor now comprises a cafe outlet, with the first floor in use as bed and breakfast accommodation. The principal architectural interest of the building relates to the design of the first-floor on the street frontage, which includes a large oriel window supported on a wide bracket, which is set within a wide, cambered blind arch, and surmounted by an open pediment ornamented with dentils. No. 7 is bordered on its northern side by Nos. 9-15, “Forbury View”, which

comprises a modern building constructed behind a retained nineteenth-century façade of four storeys (Figs. 3, 4, 16 and 18). On the southern side, Nos. 1-5 Blagrove Street comprise a four-storey brick terrace, with recessed mansard roof, which is of probable inter-War date.

Heritage Constraints

- 1.3 No. 7 is not listed, but is considered by the local planning authority to comprise a building of townscape merit, in view of the architectural interest of its street frontage. Blagrove Street and the Site are situated within Area 4: Market Place and environs of St Lawrence's Church and Town Hall, of the Market Place/London Road Conservation Area (Fig. 21), and the proposed redevelopment of No. 7 Blagrove Street may potentially affect the appearance and special interest of this part of the Conservation Area. In addition, the proposed development would affect the settings of a number of surrounding designated heritage assets, including:

- Grade II-listed Reading Museum (NHLE 1321990), located 15m to the east;
- Grade II-listed Concert Hall (NHLE 1113401), located 30m to the south-east;
- Grade II*-listed Town Council Chamber and Offices, (NHLE 1113400), located 50m to the south-east (Fig. 3);

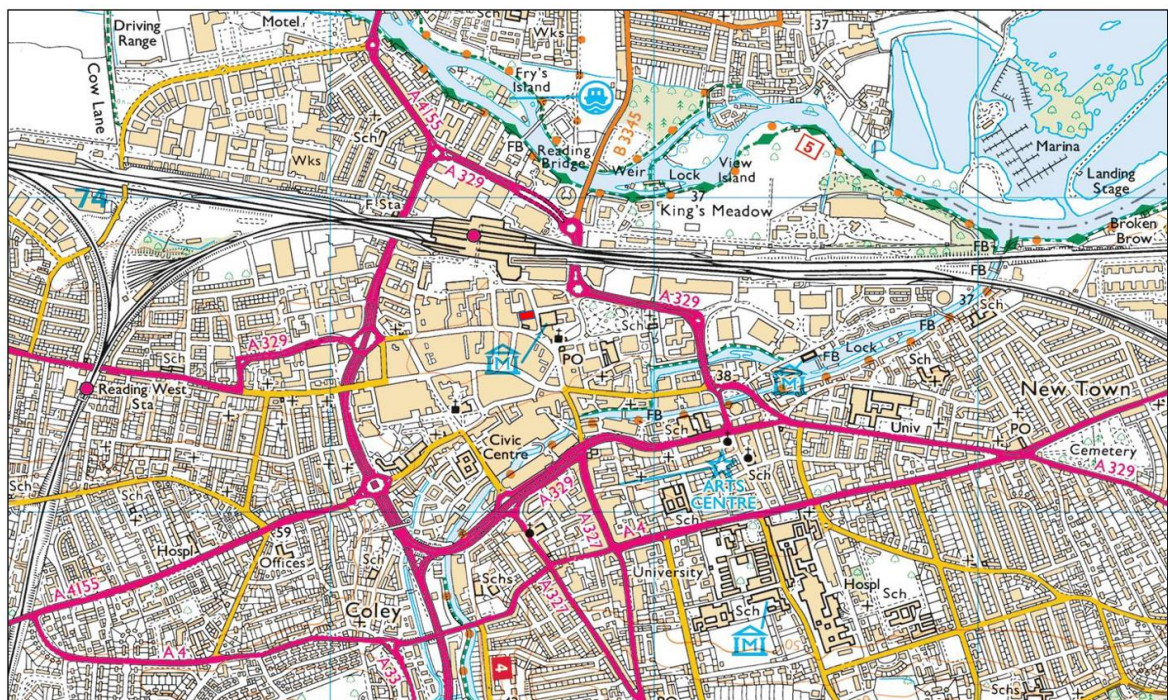


Fig. 2: Location Plan (approximate scale 1:50,000).

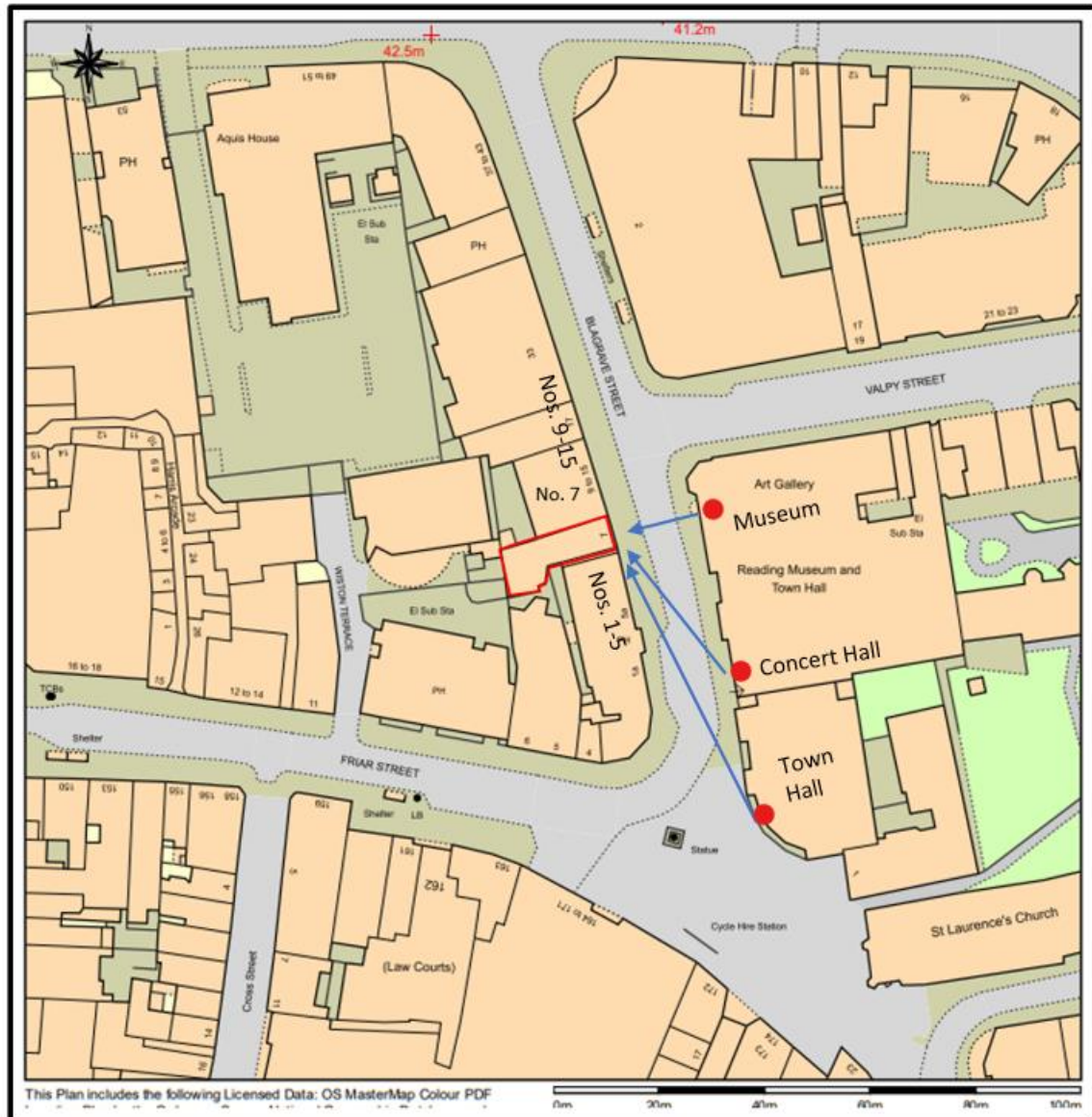


Fig. 3: Location Plan of No. 7 Blagrove Street and surrounding buildings (scale 1:1250).

Planning History

- 1.4 A previous application for demolition and construction of a five-storey building on this site (ref 151345/FULL) was refused. Reasons for refusal included the following:
- The proposed development, by reason of its height, bulk and detailed design, would cause substantial harm to the character and appearance of the existing host building, streetscene and wider conservation area, and additionally cause substantial harm to the setting of nearby listed buildings, contrary to Policies CS7 (Design and the Public Realm) and CS33 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy 2008 (Altered 2015), Policy RC5 (Design in the Centre) of the Reading Borough LDF Reading Central Area Action Plan 2009, Policy DM23*

(Shopfronts and Cash Machines) of the Reading Borough LDF Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (Altered 2015) and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

- 1.5 In their pre-application advice (ref. 220117, of June 29, 2022), Reading Borough Council made the following comments:
- The site is identified as being of townscape merit, located within a Conservation Area and adjacent to listed buildings. The submitted information states a Heritage Statement would be submitted at the application stage and this is welcomed, however the demolition of the existing building, particularly the front facade is not considered acceptable.
 - The doubling in scale from two-storey building to a five-storey building would appear out-of-scale in the street-scene, where the prevalent scale is set at 3 storeys.....the removal of the distinctive neo-classical arch and the attractive first floor level is also not considered to be acceptable on this basis.
 - The applicant should consider a scheme to retain the existing building at 7 Blagrove Street and add one or two additional stories in the form of ‘attic’ accommodation as a ‘mansard’ or clear-glazed, recessed or sloping roof form’.
 - The existing building ‘stands out as a notable feature building in the street scene. This context serves to amplify the presence and importance of the building in the street scene. Overall, the building has a pleasing form and because of its appearance in contrast to the surrounding larger buildings. It warrants the importance placed upon it by the Council and it makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area’.
 - Additional levels should be subservient, and complement the historic street façade and the upper levels should gradually step back from the street. There may, therefore, be some scope to extend upwards, but extending further to the rear of the existing main rear elevations of neighbouring properties would not be acceptable due to the impact on the residents of Forbury View, at 11 Blagrove Street.
- 1.6 A full planning application (ref. 230328) was submitted on June 27, 2023, for ‘the demolition of the existing building (façade retained), and the erection of a five-storey building with a café, bed and breakfast [accommodation] and ancillary spaces’.

This application was subsequently withdrawn by the applicant, on September 8, 2023, in the light of objections raised by the Reading Borough Council planning officer. Such objections would have resulted in the refusal of the application. Objection 1, relating to heritage impacts, was as follows:

“In respect of impact to heritage assets, the front elevation of the extended building is confused in its layout with the windows offset from each other. The Inspector for the previously dismissed appeal at this site noted that the window openings of adjacent buildings along this side of Blagrove Street are uniform in their alignment and appearance which makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area. The heights of the floor plates/ceilings for each floor also does not correspond well to the adjoining building as they are set at different heights to the neighbouring buildings. It is also not clear how the proposed timber beams respect the existing brick and glazing materials characteristics of the conservation area. As such, the development is considered harmful to the character and setting of the conservation area and with the site lying within the setting of the listed Town Hall building, the development is also considered harmful to the setting of this designated heritage asset thereby failing to comply with Policies EN1, EN3 and EN6.”

Current Proposals

- 1.6 In the light of pre-application advice, it is now proposed to demolish the rear section of the building, and to retain the existing street façade. As the building is within a Conservation Area, the proposal will be subject to the advice and approval of Historic England. The retained street façade would be integrated with a new five-storey development on this site (Figs. 9-13). The adjacent building to the north is a modern, multi-storey brick building constructed behind a retained street façade, and it would be possible to match this level with a proposed new building on this site without adversely affecting local character and heritage settings (Figs. 9 and 21). Any new additional levels should be subservient to, and compliment, the historic street façade, and should therefore be gradually stepped back for the street frontage.

The aims of the Heritage Statement

- 1.7 In considering applications for development which results in impacts to listed buildings, the statutory duty, under Sections 16 (2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, is to 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”. It will also be necessary to articulate the significance of this heritage asset and to assess the impact of the proposed works upon that significance, in accordance with Paragraph 200 of the National Planning Policy Framework:

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

- 1.8 The aims of this Heritage Statement are to identify the historical development, character and significance of No. 7 Blagrove Street, together with the effects on that character and significance, and that of surrounding heritage assets, resulting from the proposed developments. The Statement will therefore address the pre-application comments made by the local planning authority, and will provide adequate supporting heritage information and justification for any harm resulting from these proposals, in accordance with Paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas Act) 1990.
- 1.9 In particular, the Heritage Statement will provide detailed descriptions and assessments of the following:
 - The historic and architectural interest and significance of No. 7 Blagrove Street and its built context;
 - The historical development of the building and surrounding area, and its relationship to early street plans;
 - A description and appraisal of the proposed development at No. 7 Blagrove Street;
 - The contribution made by No. 7 Blagrove Street to the appearance and special interest of the surrounding Conservation Area;
 - The potential impact of proposed development at No. 7 Blagrove Street on the settings of neighbouring heritage assets;
 - The potential impact of the proposed development on the Conservation Area;
 - The potential degree of harm resulting from the proposed alterations, and the justification for such harm;

- Where appropriate, recommendations for the mitigation of any resulting harm.

1.10 A site visit, including an assessment of No. 7 Blagrove Street, and its Conservation Area context, was made on September 9th, 2022, in partly overcast conditions.



Fig. 4: Architect's drawing of the existing front elevations of Nos. 1-5, No. 7, and Nos. 9-15 Blagrove Street (bad-studio architects).

2. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT AND GUIDANCE

2.1 This Heritage Statement has been compiled in accordance with the following statutory, planning policy and guidance documents:

- National Heritage Act 1983 (amended 2002);
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990;
- National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (amended December 2023);
- National Planning Practice Guidance: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (2016 revised 2021);
- English Heritage guidance: ‘Conservation Principles; policies and guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment’ (2008);
- Historic England guidance: ‘Historic Environment good practice advice in planning: Note 2: Managing significance in decision-taking in the historic environment’ (2015a); and
- Historic England guidance: ‘Historic Environment good practice advice in planning: Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets’ (2015b).

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990)

2.2 The 1990 Planning Act states that:

‘in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall, 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 that it possesses (Section 66)’.

National Planning Policy Framework (2012, rev. December 2023)

2.3 The Framework sets out national planning policy relating to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. It defines the historic environment as: “all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscape and planted or managed flora.” Individual components of the historic environment are considered to constitute heritage assets: “buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having a degree

of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of their heritage interest”.

2.4 Key tenets of the Framework are that:

- when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. The more important the asset, the greater that weight should be (Paragraph 205).
- heritage significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset, or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to, or loss of, a Grade II-listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to, or loss of, designated assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, Grade I or II*-listed buildings, registered parks and gardens and World Heritage Sites should be wholly exceptional (Paragraph 206).
- where a proposed development 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 (Paragraph 208).
- With regard to non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having due regard to the scale of any harm or loss, and to the significance of the heritage asset affected (Paragraph 209).
- Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas [and World Heritage Sites], and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably (Paragraph 212)

2.5 Local Planning Authorities are urged to request applicants to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposed development, including any contribution made to significance by their setting. The level of detail required in the assessment should be “proportional to the assets’ importance, and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance”.

Planning Practice Guidance

- 2.6 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (MHCLG, 2021) clarifies the above NPPF requirement under the heading ‘What is the main legislative framework for planning and the historic environment?’ where it states that:

‘In addition to the normal planning framework set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.....the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides specific protection for buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest.’

- 2.7 Any decisions relating to listed buildings and their settings, and Conservation Areas, must address the statutory considerations of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (see in particular sections 16, 66 and 72) in addition to satisfying the relevant policies within the National Planning Policy Framework and the Local Plan.

- 2.8 PPG states that local planning authorities may identify non-designated heritage assets, and in some areas these heritage assets may be identified as ‘locally-listed’ (DCLG et al. 2014, para. 39). These identified heritage assets may include buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes, which have a degree of value meriting consideration in planning decisions but which are not formally designated heritage assets.

- 2.9 The PPG states under ‘Why is ‘significance’ important in decision-taking?’ that:

‘Heritage assets may be affected by direct physical change or by change in their setting. Being able to properly assess the nature, extent and importance of the significance of a heritage asset, and the contribution of its setting, is very important to understanding the potential impact and acceptability of development proposals’.

- 2.10 Under the discussion of ‘How to assess if there is substantial harm?’ the PPG offers:

‘What matters in assessing if a proposal causes substantial harm is the impact on the significance of the heritage asset. As the National Planning Policy Framework makes clear, significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting’.

- 2.11 The PPG states under ‘What is the setting of a heritage asset and how should it be taken into account?’ that:

‘A thorough assessment of the impact on setting needs to take into account, and be proportionate to, the significance of the heritage asset under consideration and the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance and the ability to appreciate it. Setting is the surroundings in which an asset is experienced and may therefore be more extensive than its curtilage. All heritage assets have a setting, irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not. The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places. For example, buildings that are in close proximity but are not visible from each other may have a historic or aesthetic connection that amplifies the experience of the significance of each’.

Local Planning Policy

The Reading Borough Council Local Plan 2016-2036

- 2.12 Policies for the protection and conservation of the historic environment are included within the Reading Borough Council Local Plan, which was adopted in November 2019 and is intended to manage development within the Borough to the year 2036. Within the Local Plan, Policy EN2 relates to the protection and enhancement of the Historic Environment, Policy EN3 the enhancement of Conservation Areas, and Policy EN6 the management of new development within historic contexts.

Policy EN2: The protection and enhancement of the historic environment

- 2.13 Historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings, will be protected and, where possible, enhanced. This will include Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, Historic Parks and Gardens and other features with local or national significance, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and assets on the Local List. 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.

- 2.14 Proposals should seek to 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. Applications which affect Historic Parks and Gardens will safeguard features which form an integral part of the special character or appearance of the park or garden. Development will not detract from the enjoyment, layout, design, character, appearance, features or setting of the park or garden, key views out from the park, or prejudice its future restoration. Applications which affect, or have the potential to affect, the significant features of heritage assets should be justified by a Heritage Statement.
- 2.15 The Council will monitor buildings and other heritage assets at risk through neglect, decay or other threats, proactively seeking solutions for assets at risk, including consideration of appropriate development schemes that will ensure the repair and maintenance of the asset, and, as a last resort, using its statutory powers. Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect or of damage to a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

Policy EN3: The Enhancement of Conservation Areas

- 2.16 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 of conservation areas. These may include:
- Reducing visual clutter caused by negative factors, such as poles and overhead wires, satellite dishes or unnecessary street furniture;
 - Restoring original building features;
 - Removing inappropriate additions or alterations to buildings;
 - Protecting and encouraging the maintenance of green spaces and important trees, particularly where they are intrinsic to the history and character of the area;
 - Improving signage and street furniture;

- Restoring or re-establishing appropriate paving, railings or walls;
- Sympathetic landscaping and planting;
- Improving or restoring green spaces, including front gardens, that are appropriate to the historic interest of a Conservation Area;
- Signage that reveals and promotes the Conservation Area and its boundaries;
- Interpretation panels to inform the public of the area's historical significance.

Where a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan has been adopted for a particular Conservation Area, this will be a material consideration in determining applications for development.

Policy EN6: New Development in a Historic Context

- 2.17 In areas characterised by heritage assets, the historic environment will inform and shape new development. New development will make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development. When determining planning applications for new development, the following factors will be taken into consideration:
- a. The positive contribution of the development to the existing historic townscape (scale, height, mass, proportion, plot size, street form, materials, significant vistas and views, and open space);
 - b. Sensitivity to historic context;
 - c. Reflection of borough-wide major heritage themes that contribute to local distinctiveness (e.g. patterned brickwork or former worker terraced housing);
 - d. Whether development promotes and/or improves access to previously undiscovered or neglected historic significance.
- 2.18 In support of the above policies, an explanatory paragraph within the Local Plan emphasises that Reading Borough Council is committed to protecting and, where appropriate, enhancing, Reading's historic environment. This includes ensuring that buildings and features of local architectural and historic interest are taken fully into account and safeguarded, as appropriate. New development in the vicinity of historic assets or at the edges of conservation areas should be sympathetic. It should reflect

elements of the local historic environment in the form of the new development. This could include a wide range of matters such as footprint sizes, setbacks from the road frontage, landscaping, window placement and size, prevailing building height or architectural features. The aim is not to copy existing heritage, but to use new development to underline key consistent elements of the local historic environment. Good, modern design that is complimentary to the historic environment will be acceptable and preferable to ‘pastiche.’

3. METHODOLOGY

Historic England Guidance

- 3.1 The methodologies employed in this assessment are in accordance with the relevant current historic guidance on the interpretation and implementation of NPPF, including:
- Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking (Historic England, 2015a);
 - Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England, 2017); and
 - Historic England Advice Note 12 Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets (Historic England 2019).
- 3.2 The Historic England *Planning Note No 3* (Historic England 2015b) provides key stages of consideration in regard to assessing the impact of a proposal on the setting of a designated heritage asset (listed building) as follows:
- Identify the degree to which setting makes a contribution to the significance or the heritage asset or allows its significance to be appreciated;
 - Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance or on the ability to appreciate it;
 - Explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm; and
 - Make and document the decision.
- 3.3 Paragraphs 9 and 10 of *Note Number 3* also provide an overall and general understanding of ‘Setting’. Paragraph 9 states ‘Setting is not itself a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation, although land comprising a setting may itself be designated. Its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or the ability to appreciate that significance’. While Paragraph 10 states ‘The contribution of a setting to the significance of a heritage asset is often expressed by reference to views, a purely visual impression of an asset or place which can be static or dynamic, long, short or of lateral spread, and include a variety of views of, from, across, or including that asset.’

General

- 3.4 The methodology employed by this assessment is in accordance with key professional guidance, including the *Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment* (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 2014), the Historic England guidance *Conservation Principles* (2008) and Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: *Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment* (Historic England 2015). Impacts to heritage settings were assessed using the methodology detailed within the current Historic England guidance *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: the setting of heritage assets* (2015).

Sources

- 3.5 This Heritage Statement has involved detailed consultation of readily-available historical information drawn from documentary and cartographic sources. The major repositories of information consulted have comprised:
- National Heritage List for England (EH);
 - Published and unpublished documentary sources;
 - Reading Borough Council online information relating to the historic environment;
 - Historic maps and photographs;
 - English Heritage Archives (EHA) and AMIE (Archives and Monuments Information, England) data;
 - Online sources, including Local Plan policies and information.
- 3.6 A bibliography of documentary, archive and cartographic sources consulted is included in the References section of this report.

The Significance of Heritage Assets

- 3.7 Heritage assets are defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (henceforth, 'the Framework'; revision of December, 2023) 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'. The term Heritage Asset includes both designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority as

possessing heritage significance (including locally- listed structures)'. Designated heritage assets include: World Heritage Sites; Scheduled Monuments; Listed Buildings; Protected Wreck Sites; Registered Parks and Gardens; Registered Battlefields; and Conservation Areas. Non-designated heritage assets include sites held on the Historic Environment Record, in addition to other elements of the landscape understood to have a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions.

- 3.8 The assessment of the heritage value (significance) of a site determines the ways in which particular aspects of a place and different periods in its evolution contribute to, or detract from, those identified heritage values associated with the asset.
- 3.9 Heritage significance is defined in Planning Practice Guidance (Annex 2, 2021) as 'the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical fabric, but also from its setting'
- 3.10 Current national guidance for assessing the significance of heritage assets is based on the criteria provided by Historic England (formerly English Heritage) in *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* (English Heritage 2008). Within this document, significance is weighed by the estimated potential for the asset to demonstrate the following criteria:
- Evidential value derives from 'the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity' (ibid, 28). It is primarily embodied by physical remains or historic fabric, but also includes buried archaeology;
 - Historical value derives from 'the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present' (ibid, 28). Illustrative historical values depend on visibility in a way that evidential value does not; and 'have the power to aid interpretation of the past [...] through shared experience of a place' (ibid, 29). Associative historical values relate to historical connections with a notable family, person, event or movement;
 - Aesthetic values derive from 'the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place' (ibid, 30). Aesthetic value might be generated through conscious design and artistic endeavour, fortuitous and

organic change, and the relationship of structures and materials to their setting; · Communal value is tied to historical (associative) value and aesthetic value, deriving from ‘the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory’ (ibid, 31);

- Communal values may be commemorative, symbolic or social. The latter is typically ‘associated with places that people perceive as a source of identity, distinctiveness, social interaction and coherence,’ and might only be articulated when the resource is under threat (ibid, 32).

3.11 Further information on good practice in implementing historic environment policy in the NPPF is provided within the guidance Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (Historic England 2015a). This document provides advice on the assessment of the significance of heritage assets in support of applications for planning permission, and emphasises that the information required regarding heritage significance should be no more than would be necessary to inform the planning decision.

Assessing levels of Impact

3.12 Impact assessment addresses predicted changes in the existing condition of the environment, as a result of a proposed development. The significance of an impact is generally determined as the combination of the ‘sensitivity and/or value’ of the affected receptor, and the predicted magnitude of change. In this case, heritage receptors comprise a group of Grade II-listed buildings, which may be considered both as individual structures and as a coherent group of related assets. These are considered to represent receptors of medium to high sensitivity and/or value.

Magnitude of Impact

3.13 The determination of the magnitude of change is based on the current level of survival, or condition, of the receptor. The variable factors which determine the magnitude of change include the vulnerability or sensitivity of the site or feature to change. The criteria commonly used to determine the magnitude of impact are as described in the following table:

Magnitude of Impact	Description
Major	The proposed development would cause a large change to existing environmental conditions. Complete destruction of the site or feature. Change resulting in a fundamental change to the ability to understand or appreciate the asset and its context and setting.
Moderate	The proposed development would cause noticeable change to existing environmental conditions. Change resulting in appreciable change to the ability to understand or appreciate the asset and its context and setting.
Minor	The proposed development would cause small change to existing environmental conditions. Change resulting in small change to the ability to understand or appreciate the asset and its context and setting.
Negligible	The proposed development would result in no discernible change to existing environmental conditions. Negligible change or no material change to the site or feature. No change to the ability to understand or appreciate the asset and its context and setting.

Table 1: Criteria used to determine the level of impact.*Significance of Impact*

3.14 The significance of impact and environmental effect is determined by two variables:

- The importance or significance of the receptor; and
- The magnitude of change affecting the receptor.

Environmental effects may be either adverse or beneficial, depending on the nature of the impact.

Receptor sensitivity/value	Magnitude of Impact			
	Major	Moderate	Minor	Negligible
Very high	Substantial	Substantial	Moderate	Slight
High	Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible
Medium	Moderate	Slight	Negligible	Negligible
Low	Slight	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Table 2: Criteria used to determine the significance of impact.

Sectoral Guidance

3.15 This Statement has been compiled in accordance with the following statutory, planning policy and guidance documents:

- National Heritage Act 1983 (amended 2002);
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990;
- National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (revised December, 2023);
- National Planning Practice Guidance: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment 2016 (revised 2021).

4. No. 7 BLAGRAVE STREET AND THE PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT

No. 7 Blagrove Street: A Description

- 4.1 No. 7 Blagrove Street is a distinctive two-storey building, of late nineteenth-century date, which occupies a prominent location on the west side of the street (Figs. 1, 4 and 5). The historic form of the ground floor has been largely replaced by the insertion of a modern shop frontage, although this is framed by original pilasters and an entablature which retain stucco decoration (Fig. 1). At first-floor level, scrolled corbels support a deep, moulded cornice. Above this is a prominent oriel window, which incorporates three central lights, with lights at either side containing curved panes. Each light comprises a small upper casement with a single pane, and a larger lower casement, again with a single pane. The oriel displays a cornice above, with a shallow-domed lead roof. It is set within two wide, plain pilasters, and beneath a cambered arch featuring detailed moulding and a false keystone with vermiculated detail. The uppermost part of this elevation consists of an open pediment, with busy dentil detailing. To either side are short, scalloped sections of wall, featuring stubby finials or acroteria.

The significance of No. 7 Blagrove Street

- 4.2 The interior spaces within No. 7 are understood to have been subject to widespread modern conversion, and have lost most of their historic detail and character. They are therefore considered to retain very little heritage value. The principal significance of No. 7 therefore relates almost entirely to the architectural interest of its street frontage, which, in its detailing and proportions, is considered to be derivative of the Beaux Arts style of the period, and as such is relatively unusual for Reading (Figs. 1 and 5). The architectural quality of this frontage contributes positively to the surrounding streetscape, and to the appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 4.3 No. 7 Blagrove Street retains historical illustrative values, which relate to the nineteenth-century growth and development of the town, and to the adoption of fashionable concepts of architectural design, which are in themselves illustrative of the tastes and aspirations of the time. It is therefore an interesting example of a relatively flamboyant architectural style, which contrasts with that of many contemporary buildings within Reading town centre. The building also retains some important design aesthetic values

which relate to the distinctive quality of its street frontage, and to the incorporation of architectural features within an ornate and well-balanced composition, which includes a number of classical elements (Figs. 1 and 5). As the street frontage is the only part of the building to retain appreciable levels of historic and architectural interest, it may be considered overall to comprise a heritage asset of only moderate significance.



Fig. 5: View, looking west, of the street frontage of No. 7, Blagrove Street.

A Brief History

- 4.4 Reading displayed little significant growth until the mid-nineteenth-century, when the arrival of the Great Western Railway stimulated considerable economic expansion and change. Until this time, Reading retained much of the street-plan of the medieval town, and had not expanded significantly beyond this. The later nineteenth-century expansion incorporated major roads leading away from the medieval core of the town, together with

considerable redevelopment within the town centre itself, including along Blagrove Street and surrounding areas. The property boundaries along Blagrove Street provide no evidence of the former burgage plots found within the medieval core of the town.



Fig. 6: Extract from the Ordnance Survey England and Wales 25-inch series 1842-1952, surveyed in 1875 (National Library of Scotland).

- 4.5 There is no cartographic evidence for No. 7 Blagrove Street before the late nineteenth century. The Ordnance Survey map of 1875 (Fig. 6) depicts much of the western side of Blagrove Street as undeveloped at this time, with a developed frontage restricted to a few properties at the southern end of the street. The block immediately to the north of Valpy Street is depicted as almost wholly undeveloped, suggesting that the pace of nineteenth-century expansion and development had yet to make a significant impact on areas to the north of the town centre.
- 4.6 By the time of the Ordnance Survey map of 1898 (Fig. 7), development has been rapid along Blagrove Street, and within areas to the north of the Town Hall. The plot of No. 7 is recognisable, although those of some neighbouring properties are not, suggesting that considerable redevelopment has occurred during the earlier twentieth century.

Depictions of the properties and plots on the southern side of No. 7 do not accord with the current plans of buildings in this location, which are therefore of probable 1930s or post-War date (Figs. 7 and 8).



Fig. 7: Extract from the Ordnance Survey England and Wales 25-inch series 1842-1952, revised in 1898 (National Library of Scotland).

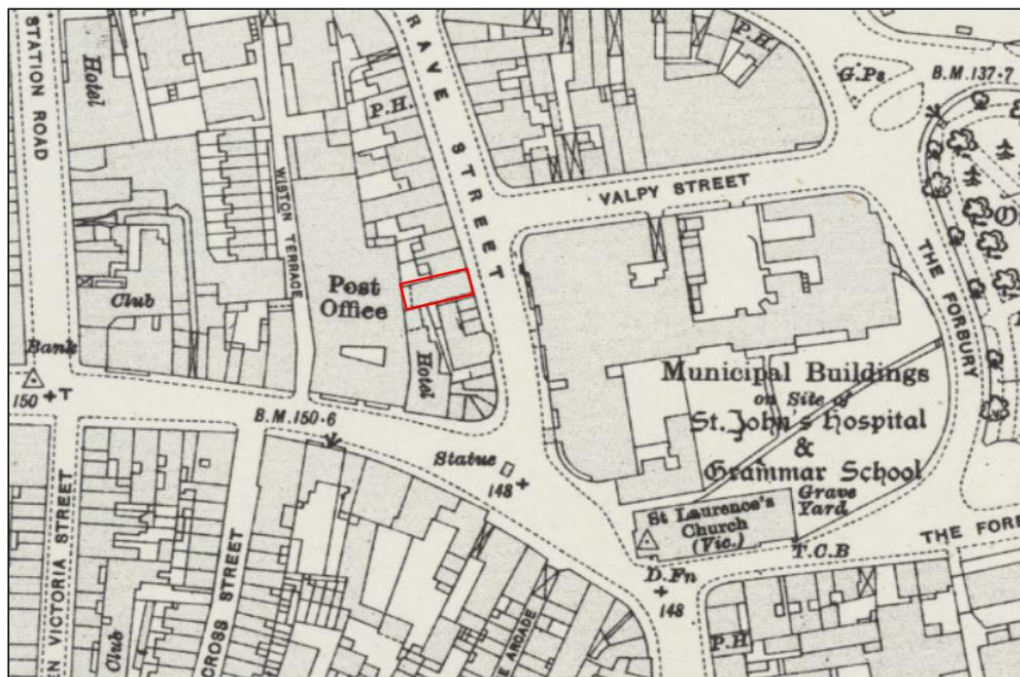


Fig. 8: Extract from the Ordnance Survey England and Wales 25-inch series 1842-1952, published in 1934 (National Library of Scotland).

The Proposed Development

4.7 The proposed development will demolish most of the existing form of No. 7 Blagrove Street, while retaining the street frontage. Two additional floors would be constructed

within the footprint of the existing building (Figs. 9 and 12). The proposed new building would closely match the scale and roof-lines of adjacent buildings immediately to the north and south (Figs. 9 and 10). The additional levels of the new building would be subservient to the retained front facade, and would be gradually stepped back from the line of the street frontage, thus complementing the historic street frontages and surrounding upper levels of adjacent buildings (Fig. 11).



Fig. 9: Architect's drawing of the proposed street elevation of No. 7 Blagrove Street and surrounding buildings, incorporating the new building behind the retained frontage (bad-studio architects).

- 4.8 Principal design changes to the proposed new building have included the uniform alignment of windows on the street frontage, and the alignment of floor-plates with those of the adjoining 9-15 Blagrove Street, immediately to the north-west (Figs. 9 and 10). The floor-plans and rear elevation of the proposed scheme have been reduced, both in terms of size and volume, to address the objections of the local planning authority (Figs. 11-14). The previously proposed second-floor terracing has been omitted from the current scheme, and all proposed terraces would be accessed only for the purposes of maintenance and cleaning. The same number of rooms overlooking the rear of Nos. 1-5 Blagrove Street would be retained. Other rooms facing the rear of Nos. 1-5 Blagrove Street would be located on the third and fourth floors, and would feature additional windows facing the rear of the development (Figs. 11 and 13). The rear elevation would be finished in a plain painted render (Fig. 13).

- 4.9 The restrained, modern design of the proposed new building would incorporate full-height glazing on all floors, with grey brick construction and detail to match that of adjoining buildings, particularly that of Nos. 9-15 (Figs. 9, 16 and 18). The scale, material palette and finish of the proposed new building would be consistent with that of the visible upper levels of adjoining Nos. 9-15 Blagrove Street, which is also a modern building constructed behind a retained nineteenth-century façade (Figs.1, 4 and 9).



Fig. 10: Architect's drawings of the front elevation of No. 7 and adjoining buildings, showing the proposed alignments of windows and floor plates (bad studios architects).

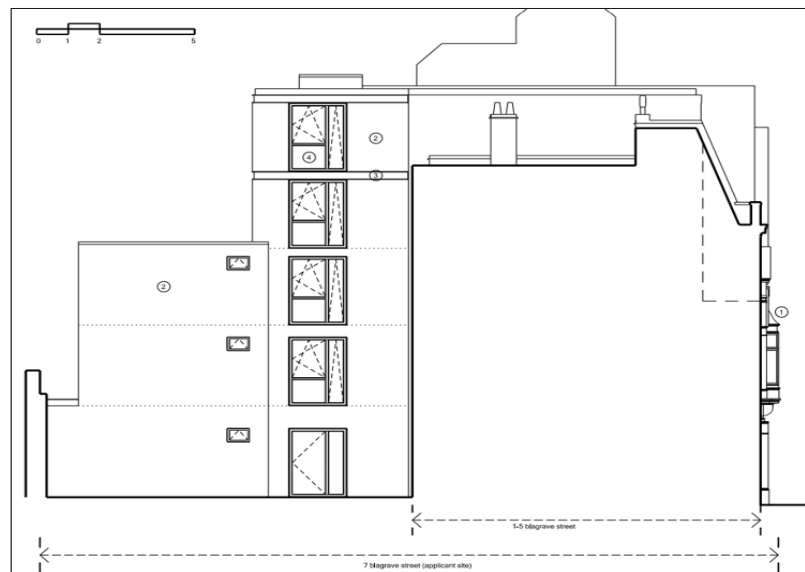


Fig. 11: Proposed side elevations of No. 7 and adjoining buildings (bad studios architects).

- 4.10 The floor-plans of the proposed new building are shown on Fig. 12, below. These indicate that there have been relatively few changes to the internal layout and plan-form which was proposed for the previous scheme, but that the current scheme would entail a considerable decrease in the area and footprint of the first, second and third floors, resulting in a substantial decrease in overall massing at the rear of the building.



Fig. 12: Floor plans of the proposed new building at No. 7 Blagrove Street, with changes in the massing of the building at the rear (bad studios architects).



Fig. 13: Architect's drawing of the proposed rear elevations of (from left to right) Nos. 9-15, No. 7 and Nos 1-5 Blagrove Street (bad-studio architects).

- 4.9 In terms of side and rear elevations, the new building would represent a small but perceptible decrease in overall massing (Figs. 12 and 14), although side views would not be available, and the rear of the building would not be visible from Blagrove Street, or from sensitive heritage locations, due to intervening built form. The profile of the first and second floors would extend to the rear as previously, although the upper floors would be of more limited plan and massing than previously, thus limiting potential visibility from the rear elevations of adjoining buildings on Blagrove Street (Figs. 11, 13 and 14).
- 4.10 Within rear views, the current incongruity in building heights would be resolved, with that of the new building at No. 7 conforming closely to that of the adjoining Nos. 1-5 and Nos.9-15, and resulting in consistent building heights and profiles along this side of Blagrove Street (Figs. 10, 13 and 14). Such views would not incorporate parts of the retained façade of No. 7, although views of the existing rear elevation of the building are of little architectural interest or heritage value, and make correspondingly little contribution to its overall significance.

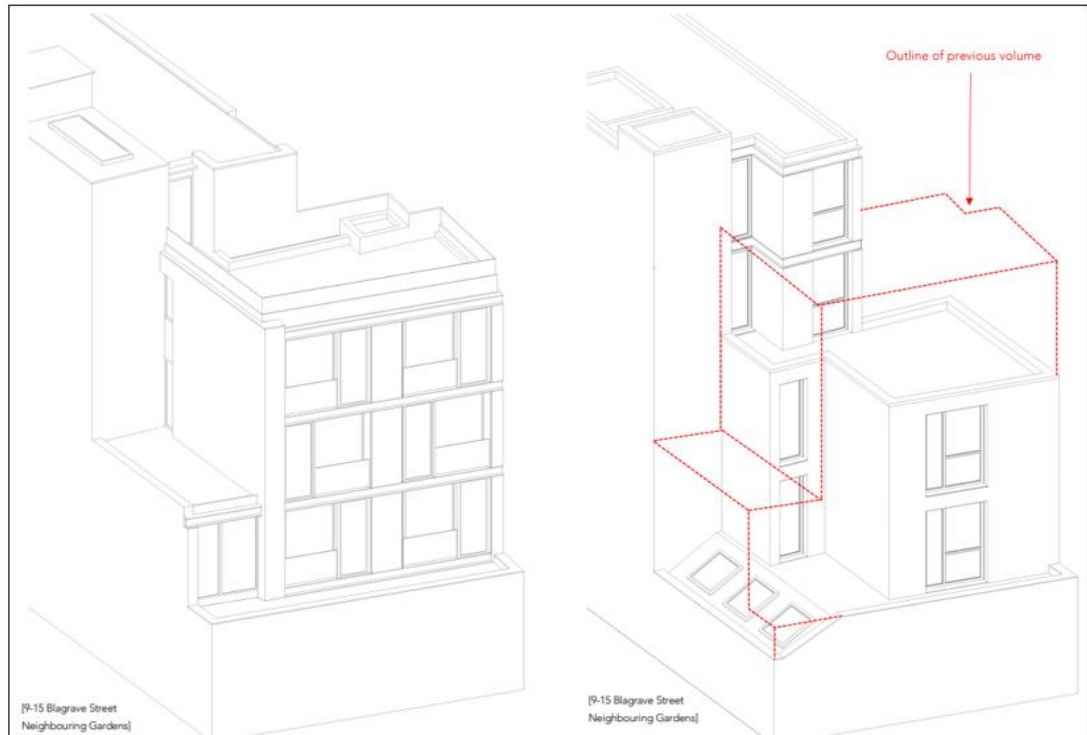


Fig. 14: Architect's axonometric projections of the previously proposed rear elevation of No. 7 (left) and the currently proposed, showing the reduction in building volume and massing (bad-studio architects).

5. A HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 This section considers the potential effect of the proposed redevelopment of No.7 Blagrove Street on the significance of neighbouring heritage receptors, including the Market Place and London Street Conservation Area, through changes to their settings. The effect on No. 7, as a heritage asset of more limited significance, is also considered.

No. 7 Blagrove Street

- 5.2 The principal heritage value and significance of this building resides overwhelmingly in the architectural interest of its street frontage, which is proposed to be retained *in situ* as part of the scheme (Figs. 1, 5 and 9). The building otherwise retains little heritage value, and its interior spaces have been subject to extensive modernisation and alteration. That aspect of the building which is of primary significance, and comprises its contribution to surrounding townscape and the Conservation Area, would be preserved, and the proposed demolition of the remainder of the building would therefore result in a correspondingly low level of harm.
- 5.3 It is proposed to progressively step-back the upper levels of the new building at No. 7 from the line of the street frontage, so that the retained façade can be seen and appreciated as an historic feature, and with its original urban context. The stepping-back of the upper levels will also complement the surrounding upper levels of adjoining buildings, particularly Nos. 9-15, immediately to the north (Figs. 9, 10 and 11).

The Setting of Reading Museum

- 5.4 Reading Museum is listed at Grade II (NHLE 1321990) and is the northernmost element of a contiguous group of late nineteenth-century civic buildings which are located along the eastern side of Blagrove Street (Figs. 3 and 15). These are all of closely-related architectural character, and display important group value. The Museum building is in an asymmetrical gothic style, in dark-blue brick, with red brick and terracotta dressings, which closely references the design and character of the adjoining Concert Hall, also designated by Grade II listing. The primary significance of this building resides in its historic character and built form, although setting also contributes to this significance.



Fig. 15: View, looking south-east, of the Grade II-listed Museum and wider Town Hall Complex.

- 5.5 The Museum building is the closest heritage receptor to No.7, and faces it directly across Blagrove Street (Figs. 3 and 15). This view also incorporates the retained facade and modern building of Nos. 9-15, immediately to the north (Fig. 18). Within this view, the retained facade of No. 7 would still be prominent, with two visible storeys of new construction above (Fig. 9). The visibility of the new build would be to some extent limited by the proposed stepping back of the upper levels from the line of the street frontage. The new construction at No. 7 would have the advantage of blocking direct views of the prominent expanse of new brick walling on the side elevation of Nos, 9-15, which are currently visible at street level from the perspective of the Museum.
- 5.6 The overall change in the quality of westward views from the Museum would not change appreciably, and the magnitude of impact of the setting of this building would be minor (Fig. 16). The visual impact of the higher storeys of the new building at No. 7 would be to some extent limited by the extensive use of glazed surfaces, thus limiting perceptions of massing, and creating a more visually permeable effect. The quality of such views would also be enhanced by revised design proposals, which would align the fenestration and floor plates of the new building with those of Nos. 9-15 Blagrove Street (Figs. 9 and

10). The level of harm to the significance of the Grade II-listed Museum would be minimal, and certainly well within the lower range of less than substantial.



Fig. 16: No. 7 Blagrove Street and adjoining buildings, looking south-west from the corner of Valpy Street, adjacent to the Grade II-listed Museum.



Fig. 17: View, looking south-east, of the Grade II-listed Concert Hall, with the Grade II*-listed Town Hall beyond.

The Setting of the Concert Hall

- 5.7 The Grade II-listed Concert Hall (NHLE 1113401) comprises the middle element of the architecturally-linked ensemble of late nineteenth-century civic buildings on the eastern side of Blagrove Street (Figs. 3, 15 and 17). It is in a distinctive Gothic style, of 1879-1882, and continues, in a more emphatic form, the style of the Waterhouse-designed Town Hall, located immediately to the south. This building is located some 30m to the south-west of No. 7 Blagrove Street at the closest point. The principal significance of the Concert Hall resides in its architectural form and historic fabric, although setting also contributes importantly to significance.



Fig. 18: View, looking north-west from the Grade II-listed Concert Hall, towards No. 7 Blagrove Street.

- 5.8 From the western elevation of the Concert Hall, the street frontage of No. 7 is viewed obliquely, with the brick side walls of the modern building at Nos. 9-15 featuring prominently (Fig. 18). As with views from the adjacent Museum, the visibility of the upper storeys of the proposed new building at No.7 would be limited from this perspective, as these would be stepped back from the line of the street frontage, so that the retained façade would be viewed, as now, as a distinct component of the streetscape (Fig. 9). The glazed upper storeys of the new building on this site would be partly visible above the retained facade, but would not feature prominently in such views, although these may display a degree of reflectivity in longer views. The magnitude of impact to setting in this

case would be minor, and the proposed new building at No. 7 would not appreciably affect the quality of views of the western side of Blagrove Street from the perspective of the Concert Hall. Again, the level of resulting harm to the significance of this building would be very limited.

The Setting of the Town Council Chamber and Offices

- 5.9 The Town Council Chamber and Offices are listed at Grade II*, in view of their particular historic and architectural interest (NHLE 1133400). The building is in a more subdued gothic style, in red and grey brick, with terracotta ornament, to a design by Waterhouse, of 1872-1875 (Figs. 3, 17 and 19). Together with the architecturally-linked group of the Museum and Concert Hall, the Town Council Chamber forms an imposing and important group, which is one of the most distinctive architectural statements within the town (Fig. 15). The principal significance of this building resides in its architectural form and historic fabric, although aspects of its setting also contribute to significance.



Fig. 19: View, looking south-east, of the Blagrove Street elevation of the Grade II*-listed Town Council Chamber and Offices.

- 5.10 The Town Council Chamber and Offices are located some 60m to the south-east of No. 7 Blagrove Street, and are inter-visible within it, but obliquely, and at greater distance. From this perspective, the retained facade of No. 7 would be visible, but due to the more constrained angle of view, the upper levels of the proposed new building behind the facade would be altogether less visible, particularly as these would be progressively stepped-back from the line of the street frontage, and would be largely concealed by the intervening built-form of Nos. 1-5 Blagrove Street (Fig. 3). Within the broader conspectus of streetscapes available from the perspective of this building, No. 7 would appear as a relatively minor component along the line of Blagrove Street (Fig. 20). The effect of the proposed redevelopment of No. 7 on the wider setting and significance of the Town Council Chamber and offices would be minimal, and there would be no appreciable change in the quality of views incorporating Blagrove Street and No. 7. The magnitude of impact in this case would be negligible.



Fig. 20: View, looking north-west along Blagrove Street from the Grade II*-listed Town Council Chamber and Offices.

Other Heritage Receptors

- 5.11 The effect of the proposed redevelopment of No. 7 on the wider settings of other heritage receptors was assessed. From the Grade II-listed Jubilee Statue of Queen

Victoria (NHLE 1113483) located adjacent to the Town Hall, no direct views of No. 7 Blagrove Street are possible, due to the constrained angle of view and intervening built form of buildings on the western side of this street. Similarly, there is no visual connection between the Grade I-listed St Lawrence's Church and No. 7, due to the intervening built form of the Town Hall (Fig. 3). The proposed redevelopment of No. 7 will therefore not affect the wider settings of any other designated heritage assets.

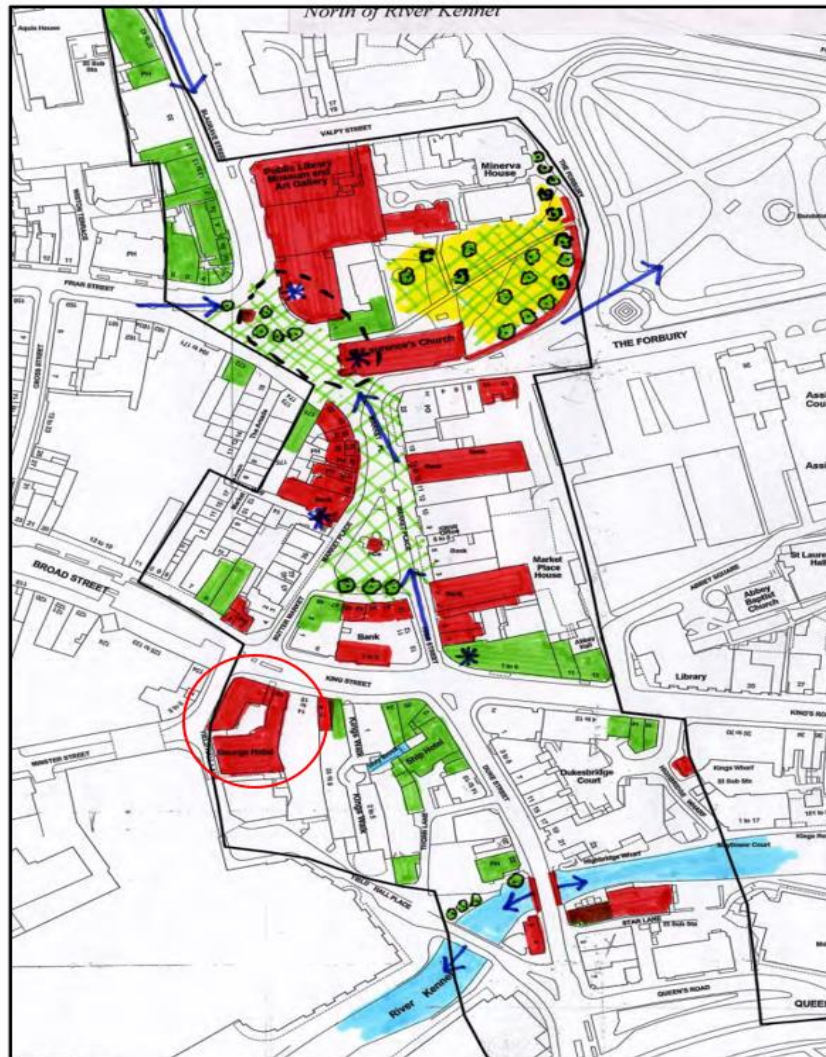


Fig. 21: Plan of the northern part of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. Listed buildings are indicated in red, locally-listed in green. (Conservation Studio 2007).

The Market Place and London Street Conservation Area

- 5.12 Blagrove Street is situated within Character Area 4: Market Place and Environs of St Lawrence's Church and the Town Hall, of this Conservation Area (Fig. 20). St Lawrence's Church and the prominent Town Hall complex are key buildings within this

part of the Conservation Area, and the Town Hall is described as ‘one of the defining images of Reading’s architecture’ (Reading Borough Council 2007, 15) (Figs. 15 and 19). These buildings make a strong architectural statement, and comprise a major aspect of the special interest of the Conservation Area. The townscape and open spaces surrounding the Town Hall complex on its western side, including Blagrove Street, also make an important contribution to the appearance and character of this part of the Conservation Area.

- 5.13 The character of the townscape surrounding No. 7 Blagrove Street, including locally-listed buildings and facades along the western side of the street, together with associated view-lines from neighbouring heritage receptors, has been assessed. From these, it is evident that effects on the wider appearance and special interest of the Conservation Area resulting from the proposed development would be very slight. This would be because the principal contribution made by the existing building at No. 7 to this special interest, ie. the architectural quality of its street frontage, would be retained and preserved *in situ*. The only potentially adverse impact would result from the upper levels of the new construction behind the retained façade, which would be stepped back from this frontage, thus limiting their visibility in most inward views. The overall effect on the Conservation Area would therefore be minimal.
- 5.14 In this context, it is important to recognise the retained facade and new construction at adjoining 9-15 Blagrove Street (“Forbury View”), where an imposing, late nineteenth-century four-storey façade has been retained, with new construction behind (Fig. 14). Although of greater vertical scale than the existing, two-storey building of No. 7, the effect of this particular redevelopment on heritage settings and the overall quality of the streetscape has been very slight, and a comparable redevelopment at No. 7 would be equally acceptable.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 No. 7 Blagrove Street is a two-storey building of late nineteenth-century date, which is not listed but is recognised as having townscape value, in view of the architectural interest of its distinctive street frontage. This ornate frontage embodies aspects of Beaux Arts style, which contributes to the quality of the street scene and the Conservation Area. The building interior has been subject to considerable recent alteration, and retains little heritage value, so that the significance of this building resides almost entirely in the quality of its ornate street frontage.
- 6.2 It is proposed to redevelop the site of No. 7 as a five-storey building of modern design, which will match the scale, proportions and floor-levels of adjoining buildings on the western side of Blagrove Street. The retention *in situ* of the existing frontage of No. 7, and the construct of a stepped-back, five-storey block immediately to the rear, would result in two storeys of modern, glazed design, being visible above the retained façade. However, the stepping-back of the upper levels of the new building from the line of the street frontage, would limit the visibility of new construction in inward views, and would emphasise the value of both the retained façade and that of the adjoining Nos. 9-15 Blagrove Street.
- 6.3 The proposed redevelopment of No. 7 Blagrove Street will entail the demolition of rear elements of the building, which are of little heritage value, and the retention of the ornate street frontage which overwhelmingly embodies the principal significance of the building. On this basis, the proposed redevelopment will result in an acceptably low level of harm to the significance of this non-listed heritage asset. A planning application of 2023 was subsequently withdrawn following local planning authority objections. A revised scheme design will now be submitted which has addressed these objections, and proposes a front elevation which matches the levels of windows and floor plates of the new building with those adjacent. In addition, the rear of the new building has been reconfigured, with the upper floors occupying less floor-plan and massing than originally proposed. In addition, the material palette of the street frontage of the new building has been revised, to accord with that of adjoining Nos. 9-15 Blagrove Street.

- 6.4 The effect of the revised design of the proposed redevelopment of No. 7 Blagrove Street on the settings of three neighbouring listed buildings has been assessed in this report. These comprise individual elements of the imposing Town Hall complex of late nineteenth-century civic buildings, which include the Grade II*-listed Town Hall, designed by Waterhouse, and adjacent Grade II-listed Museum and Concert Hall. These buildings occupy the eastern street frontage, and are situated at various distance from No. 7, with the Museum building located opposite No. 7, directly across Blagrove Street.
- 6.5 The retention *in situ* of the existing street frontage of No. 7 would considerably limit adverse effects on neighbouring heritage settings, and would preserve much of the existing character of this side of Blagrove Street. The proposed stepping-back of the upper levels of the new five-storey structure on this site would limit the visibility of the new development, and perceptions of massing within inward views would also be limited by the extensive use of glazing on the front elevation, to create a lighter, more visually permeable effect. The revised design, embodying a material palette to accord with that of surrounding buildings, and the alignment of windows and floor plates with those of adjoining buildings, would also be in accordance with the character of the street, and would further enhance the appearance of the proposed development within views along Blagrove Street.
- 6.6 Of the three listed buildings concerned, the Grade II-listed Museum is located directly opposite No. 7, across Blagrove Street, and would be potentially the most affected, although in this case the overall effect on setting has been assessed as slight, due to the factors described above. Any harm to the significance of this building, resulting from change to its wider setting, would be well within the lower range of less than substantial. Visual connections between No. 7 and the other two listed buildings of the Town Hall complex are more oblique, and at greater distance, which would limit the visibility of the stepped-back upper storeys of the proposed new building. The effect on the wider settings of these two buildings would be minimal. No other settings of designated heritage assets would be affected by the proposed development of No. 7 Blagrove Street, and the overall effect on this part of the Conservation Area would be slight.

- 6.7 The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special regard to be given to the desirability of preserving a building within a Conservation Area, and any features of architectural or historic interest it possesses. This statutory approach is reflected in Policies EN1, EN3 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Council Local Plan 2016-2036. Similarly, Paragraph 205 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that, when considering the impact of development on the significance of listed buildings, great weight should be given to their conservation. On the basis of the assessment presented in this Heritage Statement, it is considered that the proposed changes to this locally-listed building are proportionate to its scale and level of significance, and would result in an acceptably low level of harm to such significance. In addition, these changes would result in acceptably low levels of harm to the significance of visually-linked heritage assets, through change to their wider setting. Such proposals are in accordance with the statutory requirements stated in Sections 66 of the Planning Act, National Planning Policy Framework and Policies EN1, EN3 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Council Local Plan.

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