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WALSINGHAM PLANNING
SPECIALIST PLANNING & HERITAGE CONSULTANTS

Planning and Heritage Statement

The Narrowboat, Blakes Lock, Reading,
RG1 3EQ

Installation of Internal and External Extract to former
pumping station

DECEMBER 2024

Walsingham Planning

Bourne House
Cores End Road
Bourne End
Buckinghamshire
SL8 5AR

Telephone
01628 532244

bourne.end@walsingplan.co.uk
www.walsinghamplanning.co.uk

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I INTRODUCTION

- I.1 Walsingham Planning has been instructed by Fuller Smith and Turner PLC to submit an application for planning permission for temporary works to the kitchen training facility at The Narrowboat, Blakes Lock, Reading:

‘Temporary installation of 2No. extract louvres to the southeast and southwest elevations through modification of 2no overlights; temporary installation of 4No. air condensers to an existing flat roof’.

- I.2 This Planning Statement outlines the proposed development against relevant planning policy and relating to heritage assets.
- I.3 The proposed development will assist the business with its training and development agenda and its sustainability agenda by assisting with the operation of the recently granted temporary change of use to a kitchen training facility for its staff.
- I.4 The works are proposed following the recent grant of full planning permission (Reference PL/24/0619) for the temporary change of use of the public house to a kitchen training facility (Chefs Academy) for Fullers staff for a period of up to 5 years. All works set out in this application are temporary in nature and will be removed from the building upon cease of the temporary use and the reinstatement of brickwork and the overlights undertaken. In addition, the air condenser units associated with the use will be removed and re-used by Fullers within their pub portfolio.
- I.5 This Planning Statement will describe the site and surroundings, will include a review of the sites planning history and relevant designations, and will describe the proposed development and assess the proposal against relevant planning policy in terms of planning impacts.
- I.6 This Planning Statement supports the proposed development and provides a full appraisal of the following proposed works. The below includes the internal works which are supported by a separate application for listed building consent:
- I.7 These application submissions comprise a comprehensive set of plans, together with the following supporting documents which should be read alongside this Planning Statement.
- Application Form
 - Planning Statement

- Design and Access Statement
- Site Location Plan
- Existing Ground Floor Plan 24-101-01-01
- Proposed Ground Floor Plan 24-101-02-01
- Existing Elevations 24-101-08-01
- Proposed Elevations 24-101-08-02
- Existing and Proposed Roof Layout 24-101-02-03
- Proposed Ground Floor Structural Details 24-101-02-02
- Proposed Extract Details 24-101-02-04
- Proposed Kitchen Section 24-101-02-05
- Noise Impact Assessment Revision 00 - Scotch Partners

- I.8 The proposed installation of air condensers and air extract systems will assist in facilitating the operation of the temporary kitchen training facility and in the future of this leisure, culture and tourism facility, by restoring the public house back into its permanent use within this established Reading Centre area once the Chefs Academy temporary use ceases.
- I.9 It is concluded that the proposals would accord with the Development Plan such that planning permission should be granted.

2 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The application site is formed of two adjoining buildings occupied by The Narrowboat public house and restaurant. The buildings are located on the south side of Gas Works Road in Reading, and there is a large car parking area to the southwest corner of the site.



- 2.2 The site is outlined in red in the site location plan above.
- 2.3 The site is also part of a historic grouping of Grade II Listed buildings and sits on the riverfront of the River Kennet.
- 2.4 The site does not sit within a conservation area.
- 2.5 The restaurant comprises the original Engine House which is Grade II Listed and has an upper mezzanine floor level occupied by additional restaurant seating. This building was built circa.

1870 and is adjoined to the east by the Pump and Turbine House and Screens House, which is currently occupied by a museum.



Above – View of river front access to adjacent museum

- 2.6 The more modern attached two-storey timber clad building to the east is occupied by The Narrowboat's bar area, kitchen and first floor ancillary bedrooms.



Above – View of river front entrance to the application site and more modern timber clad building to the southwest, which sits immediately adjacent to the car park

- 2.7 The site is located within an area of flood risk and classified by the Environment Agency as being within Flood Zone 3.



Above – View looking southwest along Gas Works Road



Above – Google Earth image of the site with site outlined in red

Planning History

2.8 The following planning permissions and listed building consent are relevant to this site:

- 010817 – Part change of use to restaurant (A3) demolition of existing industrial sheds and retention, extension and refurbishment of museum buildings – Granted 5 March 2002
- 030242 – Erection of 3-metre high timber gates – Granted 23 June 2023
- 161260 – Proposed change of use at first floor to create five guest bedrooms and associated external alterations – Granted subject to S106 agreement 14 June 2017
- PL/24/0619 – Proposed temporary change of use of the existing public house to a public house staff training facility, for a temporary period of up to five years – Granted 11 September 2024

3 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The public house is currently closed to the public and this follows a decline in trading since the pandemic. The use of the building at present is limited to the existing kitchen area which is used by Fullers staff on an ad hoc basis and to test menus. To ensure the property remains in an active and viable use in the short term, planning permission (Reference PL/24/0619) was sought and has been granted for a temporary change of use of the building as a chef's training facility for Fuller Smith and Turner staff members.
- 3.2 The proposed development will assist in retaining the long-term commitments of the business and their long-term commitments to the adjacent museum and venue of local arts and culture within Reading.
- 3.3 As referenced in the planning officer report for the temporary change of use, the public house has demonstrated that the temporary kitchen training facility will accord with the aims of Reading Local Plan Policies CR4 and RL2 by ensuring the long terms viable use of the building and for it to remain as a public house following the cease of the temporary use.
- 3.4 The design and siting of the proposed extract air condensers has evolved through various meetings and site visits with the client and their consultant's, and the proposals have regard to the character of the existing buildings and the setting of the grouping of Listed Buildings, in addition to appreciation of the visual amenities of the existing Gas Works Road street scene.
- 3.5 The proposal comprises the following external works and is accompanied by an application for listed building consent for the internal works outlined below.

External Works:

- Temporary removal of 1 No. overlight on the southeast, canal-facing elevation and 1 No. overlight on the northeast side elevation to accommodate external louvres associated with the air intake and extract system. The overlights are to be removed by Craft Glass, a Crittal window glazing expert, and stored carefully on site for reinstatement when the temporary works are removed from this part of the building. The overlight opening is to be fitted with a ply screen cut to fit the aperture and sealed and decorated internally and externally to have an Anthracite coloured finish to match the existing painted finishes to the window frames. The ply screen will then be cut to

accommodate the louvred grill which will have a matching coloured finish applied internally and externally.

- Installation of 4No. external air condensers to flat roof of modern extension with new ductwork and cabling to the interior to be via a small 200mm x 200mm opening formed in the southwest side elevation at high level and formed by carefully removing brickwork and storing this on site for reinstatement upon removal of the temporary equipment. Repair of existing guttering to the junction between the southwest elevation of the later addition and the rear face of the former pumping house.

Internal Works:

- Installation of independent steel frame comprising of 6no vertical steel struts mounted into the modern floor slab and connected by horizontal steel beams to carry necessary extract and air intake ventilation kit below. Steel frame is to be entirely independent of all remaining existing historic fittings, metal posts and beams and is accommodated below the exposed roof structure.
- New timber frame and glazed panel doors to existing opening in the southwest internal wall between training kitchen area and bar.
- Replacement of existing pipework along the interior face of the southwest wall with any new fixing to secure pipework to made in mortar joints.
- Installation of 2.5m high timber partition screens to northwest of space to form corridor between training kitchen area and raised platform area which will be secured via fixing to the existing, modern flooring.

4 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

- 4.1 This section of the statement sets out the relevant planning policies at national and local level, as well as any other documents which are material planning considerations.
- 4.2 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that “*if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise*”. Any issue that relates to the use and development of land is capable of being a material planning consideration.

Local Development Plan

- 4.3 The Development Plan includes the Reading Local Plan (adopted 4 November 2019) and the relevant policies are summarised below. Also of relevance is the Reading Centre Area Action Plan (2009).

Reading Local Plan

- 4.4 Local Plan Policy CC1, Presumption in favour of sustainable development states that a positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. Where possible, the policy advocates that the Council will work proactively with applicants to jointly find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible.
- 4.5 The Local Plan Policy CC7, Design and the Public Realm states that all development must be of a high-quality design that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The policy says that developments must respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough.
- 4.6 Policy CC8, Safeguarding Amenity, states that development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties, in terms of: privacy and overlooking, access to sunlight and daylight, visual dominance and overbearing effects of the development, harm to outlook, noise and disturbance, artificial lighting, vibration, dust and fumes, smell, crime and safety, and wind (where a development is more than 8-storeys).

- 4.7 The abovementioned policy also includes assessment of the immediate impacts of aspects of development such as operational opening hours of a business, affects of traffic movements (with particular regard to heavy goods vehicles).
- 4.8 Policy EN1, Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment states that listed buildings and their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. The policy states that proposals which affect listed buildings shall not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest, including where appropriate, their setting.
- 4.9 Policy EN15, Air Quality, states that development should have regard to the need to improve air quality and reduce the effects of poor air quality. The policy states that development that would detrimentally affect air quality will not be permitted unless the effect is to be mitigated. The criteria to be considered when assessing whether a development aligns with this policy consists of: Whether the proposal, including when combined with the cumulative effect of other developments already permitted, would worsen air quality.
- 4.10 Policy EN16, Pollution and Water Resources, states that development will only be permitted where it would not be damaging to the environment and sensitive receptors through land, noise or light pollution;
- 4.11 Policy RL1 of the Local Plan, Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Cultural Development states that main town centre leisure and cultural development will take place within or as an extension to the town centre of Reading, in order to enhance and maintain vitality and viability.
- 4.12 Policy RL6, Protection of Leisure Facilities and Public Houses, states that existing leisure facilities or public houses will generally be retained and enhanced, and there is a strong presumption in favour of retaining leisure facilities and public houses where they are the only facilities of their type in a district, major local or local centre.
- 4.13 Policy CR11, Station/River Major Opportunity Area states that development in this area will contribute towards providing a high density mix of uses to create a destination in itself and capitalise on its role as one of the most accessible locations in the southeast, and that development for education will be an acceptable part of that mix.
- 4.14 Policy CR13, East Side Major Opportunity Area, states that development within this area will provide a defined urban environment conserve and enhance listed building's, and demonstrate

that it is part of a comprehensive approach to the sub-area, which does not prevent neighbouring sites from fulfilling the aspirations of the policy.

- 4.15 Policy RC5 of the Reading Centre Area Action Plan, Design in the Centre, states that applications for development within the Reading Central Area should build on and respect the existing relationships between buildings and architectural details. The policy also states that development should be designed to respect the form and quality of detailing and materials in areas local to the development site, and should enhance community safety.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.16 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012. A revised version of the NPPF was published in July 2021, and various updates have followed the latest of which was in December 2024, with minor amendments incorporated. The NPPF is supplemented by the (ever evolving) Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), first published in March 2014.
- 4.17 Paragraph 8 of the Framework explains that sustainable development comprises three overarching objectives:
- An economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy;
 - A social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities;
 - An environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.
- 4.18 Paragraph 10 confirms that the presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the heart of the Framework in order to ensure that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way.
- 4.19 Chapter 6 of the NPPF: Building a Strong, competitive economy states (Paragraph 85) that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.

- 4.20 Chapter 7 of the NPPF: Ensuring the vitality of town centres, states that planning policies and decisions should support the role which town centres play at the heart of local communities by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and their adaptation. This approach should define a network of town centres which promotes town centres and their long-term vitality and viability, allowing them to grow and diversify in a way which can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries.
- 4.21 Chapter 8 of the NPPF: Promoting healthy and safe communities (Paragraphs 96 and 97) state that planning policies should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction including opportunities for meetings between people, and planning positively for the provision of community facilities such as public houses, and that established facilities are able to develop and modernise whilst being retained for the benefit of a community.
- 4.22 Chapter 12 of the NPPF: Achieving well-designed places (Paragraph 131) states that “The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve...” and goes on to state (Paragraph 135) that “...planning policies should ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of development”.
- 4.23 Chapter 16 of the NPPF: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment, at Paragraph 216, states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining an application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
- 4.24 Paragraph 207 of Chapter 16 states that local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made to their setting. The paragraph also states that the level of detail included should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. Paragraph 212 of this chapter states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to its conservation, and the more important the asset, the greater this weight shall be. This is irrespective of whether there is any potential harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

- 4.25 The Framework (Paragraph 213) states that any harm to, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.
- 4.26 The Framework (Paragraph 219) states that “*Local Planning Authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance*” and that “*Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset should be treated favourably*”.

5 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The proposals are in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF sets out the Government's presumption in favour of sustainable development, and states that plans and decisions should approve development proposals which accord with an up-to-date development plan, without delay.
- 5.2 Following the temporary permission for the kitchen training facility, new equipment is proposed to be installed internally and externally to the former pumping house building which will assist in the extraction of air from the kitchen training use of the building.
- 5.3 The equipment and its design and scale has evolved through meetings with the clients Consultant team and takes account of the historical and visual significance of the former pumphouse, in addition to the air quality and sound and vibration conditions of the existing kitchen and public house use. The proposal conserves the amenity of nearby occupiers with sensitive consideration of noise and vibration from the external and internal plant and sensitive consideration of air quality to nearby uses.

Visual Impacts of Development

Removal of overlights to southeast canal and northeast elevations

- 5.4 Varying options were explored for the locations of the extract grilles which included installing these at a higher level on the southwest elevation, venting through the roof, or venting through the northwest gable end wall. In respect of the higher level to the southwest elevation this was not possible due to the adjoining building and therefore limited depth of space available below the eaves, venting through the roof would require additional ductwork and disturbance to the interior finishes and external tile, and terminating to the northwest gable end was inhibited by the presence of the existing electricity substation.
- 5.5 As such, the temporary removal of 1 No overlight is proposed on the southeast canal facing elevation of the former pumping house, and the temporary removal of an overlight located on the northeast side elevation is also proposed to facilitate the extract grilles.



Above – View of southeast and northeast existing windows

- 5.6 The new extract grilles would be sited within the openings of the existing windows indicated in the photo above, with limited projections beyond the existing faces of the building. The extract grilles would be surrounded by sensitively placed ply screens, allowing the overlights to be reinstated as a single piece by a specialist Crittal window contractor (Craft Glass). This will protect the long-term visual integrity of the building on these elevations and will ensure that the building retains and conserves the contribution it has to the setting of the grouping of listed buildings within this part of the Gas Works Road and canalside streetscenes.

4No. Air condensers to existing flat roof

- 5.7 The proposed air condensers would have a height of 1.1m and as such would not be visible from the Gas Works Road elevation where they would be hidden from pedestrian views by the existing parapet roof on this northwest elevation.



Above – View looking southwest along Gas Works Road with location of louvres hidden within recessed façade elevation of the former pumphouse

- 5.8 The 200mm x 2000mm openings to facilitate the extract equipment will involve carefully removing and retaining the existing bricks and will result in limited visual impact to the amenities of the building given the location of these openings at high level within this existing side elevation.
- 5.9 Views afforded of the air condensers from the high level residential flatted development opposite would be limited. The air condensers would be consolidated with the existing extract equipment thereby resulting in a limited visual variation from the existing visual amenities of the building as shown in the photos above and below.



Above – View of existing Gas Works Road elevation

- 5.10 The scale and siting of the air condensers, along with their positioning on the flat roof obscured behind the existing parapet would result in no harm to the visual amenities or the character of the street scene and would therefore align with Local Plan Policies CC7 and EN1.

Repair of Existing Guttering

- 5.11 The existing guttering is defective and leaking causing discolouring of the brickwork to the northeast elevation of the Engine House. Repairs to the guttering are included in this application with like for like materials as demonstrated in the materials schedule supporting this Planning Statement and planning and listed building consent applications.
- 5.12 There will be no external alterations to the appearance of the northwest gable end elevation of the former pumping house and architectural qualities of this historic façade will therefore retain the buildings and their historical significance and the visual amenities of this part of the River Kennet.
- 5.13 Further, the materials to be used will be in keeping with the façade of this part of the building which will retain and conserve the visual amenities of the Gas Works Road street scene.

Residential Amenity

Noise

- 5.14 A noise report from Scotch Partners supports this planning application and describes how testing of existing acoustic levels will not be exceeded to a degree which would harm residential amenity of neighbours at residences to the northeast of the site along Kenavon Drive, the residential units opposite the side at The Meridian, and the residences accord the River Kennet.
- 5.15 Noise receptor tests were undertaken and are explained within the Noise Report, along with details of the times of operation of the temporary kitchen facility.
- 5.16 The results demonstrate that the noise emission limits of 10dBA below underlying background noise levels will be achieved with all new plant in operation during these times.
- 5.17 The report concludes that the proposed plant will have a low impact upon neighbouring uses in terms of noise and accordingly it is demonstrated that the proposals would not harm the aims of Policies within the Reading Development Plan.

Air Quality

- 5.18 The application site is located within Central Reading and nearby to the Air Quality Management Area.
- 5.19 The proposed development is not a major development, would not result in a material increase of HGVs or congestion and requires no additional car parking. As such, in line with the supporting text of Policy EN15 of the Reading Local Plan, an Air Quality Assessment is not required to support the application.
- 5.20 Timings of opening of the kitchen training facility will be in line with those assessed within the temporary change of use from 09:00 – 17:00 Mondays to Fridays and these timings would not be altered.

Parking

- 5.21 The proposal would not result in any changes to the existing car park and this would remain open for public parking within the hours of restrictions and for use by staff of the public house and the museum.

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 This application seeks planning permission for the following:

“Temporary installation of 2No. extract louvres to the southeast and southwest elevations through modification of 2no overlights; temporary installation of 4No. air condensers to an existing flat roof”.

6.2 The proposals presented within this application represent the works required to accommodate the approved change of use. All works are temporary in nature and will be removed from the building upon cease of the temporary use.

6.3 The proposals form part of a significant economic investment by Fuller Smith and Turner totalling over £0.5 million within the building to create a national training facility for their providing modern kitchen training facilities whilst making the best use of this site, which is currently close to the public, for an interim and temporary period.

6.4 The central and sensitively screened siting of the air condensers on the existing flat roof, as demonstrated on the plans supporting this application for planning permission, allows these to read as secondary and modest features to the building with no adverse impacts on the existing street scene or visual amenities of the area.

6.5 The modification of the 2No overlights will ensure that the original fabric is restored as single pieces as described in the accompanying listed building consent application to conserve the special character of the building on these southwest and northeast elevations.

6.6 Furthermore, and as demonstrated by the accompanying Noise Impact Assessment, there would be no adverse impact on the amenities of neighbouring residential occupiers.

6.7 Following the ceasing of the existing temporary permission and use of the kitchen training facility the temporary works would be removed and the building restored to its original use as a valuable meeting place for the community.

6.8 In summary, the proposal would contribute to sustainable development, seek to ensure the special significance and attraction and viability of an important community facility, and would meet with the aims of the NPPF, and the Council’s Development Plan Policies and Guidance.

6.9 This application is therefore recommended to Reading Borough Council for planning permission.