

## HERITAGE STATEMENT

FEBRUARY 2025 v 1.0

TK MAXX  
Middle Level Store A  
Oracle Shopping Centre  
Reading  
RG1 2AG



rpa:group

51-53 Church Road, Ashford, Middlesex TW15 2TY Tel. +44 (0)1784 256 579 www.therpagroup.com

Prepared for and on behalf of:  
TJX Europe

Project Name:  
TK Maxx – Middle Level Store A, Oracle Shopping Centre, Reading RG1 2AG

Report Name:  
Heritage Statement

Status Planning:  
This document has been issued and amended as follows:

| Issue | Description         | Date       | Prepared | Approved |
|-------|---------------------|------------|----------|----------|
| v1.0  | Adverts Application | 03.02.2025 | MC       | NT       |
|       |                     |            |          |          |
|       |                     |            |          |          |
|       |                     |            |          |          |
|       |                     |            |          |          |
|       |                     |            |          |          |
|       |                     |            |          |          |
|       |                     |            |          |          |
|       |                     |            |          |          |

| Contents                                           | Page |
|----------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1.0 Introduction:                                  |      |
| 1.1 The Proposal                                   | 3    |
| 1.2 The Existing Building                          |      |
| 1.3 Statement of Significance                      | 4    |
| 2.0 Legislative and Planning Policy and Framework: |      |
| 2.1 Legislation and National Planning Policy       | 5    |
| 3.0 Design Approach:                               |      |
| 3.1 Design Proposals                               | 6    |

## 1- INTRODUCTION

### 1-1: THE PROPOSAL

Prepare and submit an advert application for installation of new signage to an existing retail unit in Oracle Shopping Centre, Reading. This statement will describe the site and surroundings, document the site's planning history and assess the proposals against relevant local planning policy and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The new installation will consider materials in keeping with the existing nature of the building.

### 1-2: THE EXISTING BUILDING

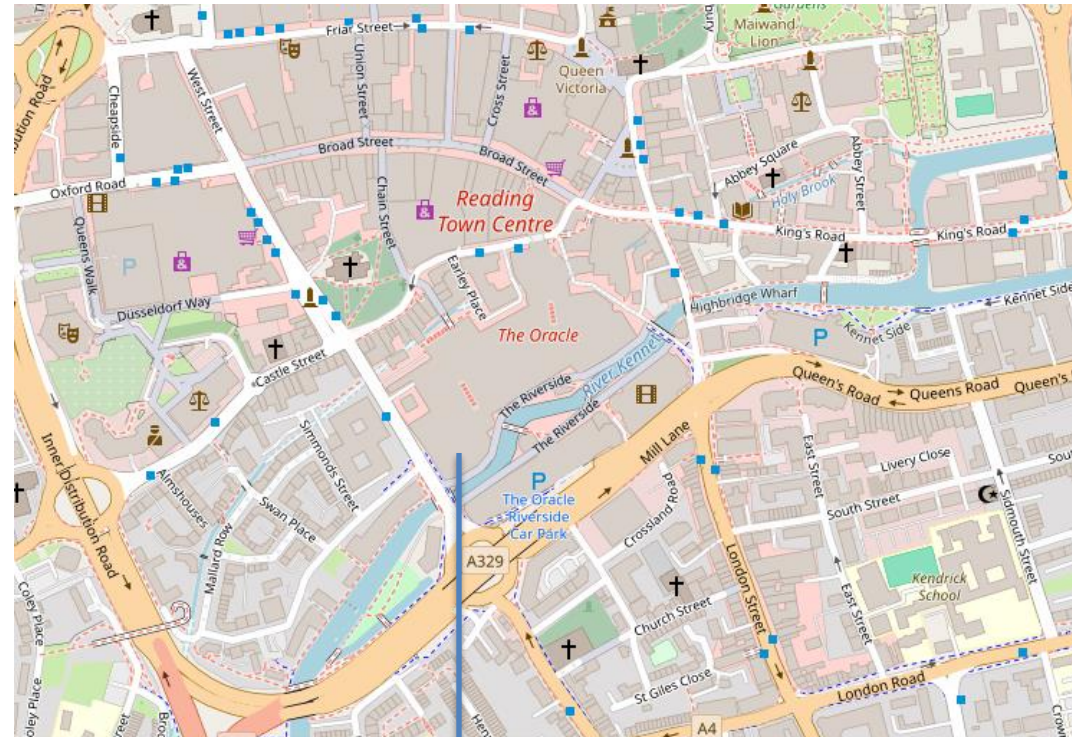
This Heritage Statement has been prepared by rpa:group at the request of our client TJ Europe, the applicant for this application.

The proposal relates to Middle Level Store A (refer to figure 1) - an existing commercial premises, that has been created by the sub-division of the old House of Fraser unit.

The property is within the demise of the Oracle Shopping Centre, but has external elevations onto Bridge Street and Riverside.

The centre opened in 1999 and is a central focal point flanked by the River Kennet, other retail units and residential properties.

The Oracle Shopping Centre sits within Reading Central Character Area 3, a modern commercial character area, but with Reading Abbey the North West and Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin to the South.



3D aerial view of Woolwich– source : Goggle Earth

Figure 1: Middle Level Store A

### 1-3: STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Reading Councils Historic Area Assessment 2023, states that "with exception of a few historic buildings, the scale and grain of the majority of modern buildings in this character area do not reflect the historic grain."

Although Minster Street is transitional in terms of having architecture of a scale and quality to contribute to the adjacent historic areas".

The overall centre although classified as modern retails, sits within a conservation area

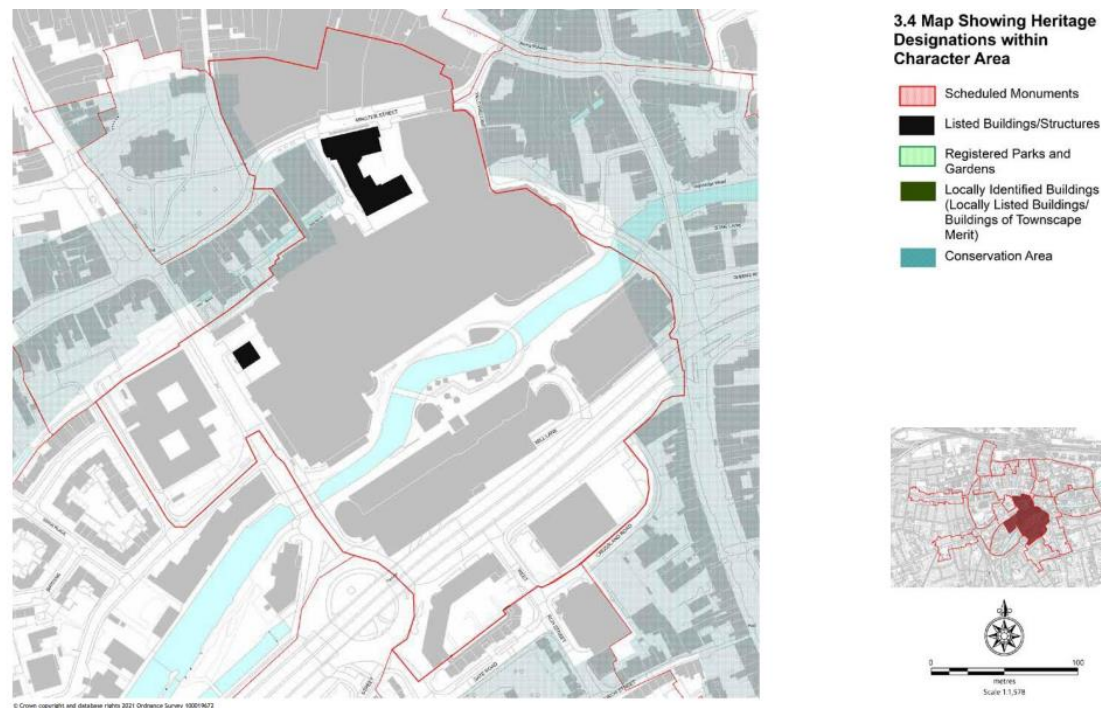


Figure 2 : Reading Historic Area Assessment Feb 2023 (Extract)

The current policy system identifies, through the National planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023, that applications should consider the potential impact of development on Heritage Assets. This term includes both designated heritage assets, which possess a statutory designation (for example listed buildings, conservation areas, and registered parks and gardens), as well as undesignated heritage assets.

### Legislation

Where any development may affect designated or undesignated heritage assets, there is a legislative framework to ensure proposed works are developed and considered with due regard for their impact on the historic environment. This extends from primary legislation under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The relevant legislation in this case extends from Section 16 of the 1990 Act which states that in considering applications for listed building consent, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the Listed Building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Section 66 further states that special regard must be given by the authority in the exercise of planning functions to the desirability of preserving or enhancing Listed Buildings and their setting.

Furthermore, Section 72 of the 1990 Act states that in exercising all planning functions, local planning authorities must have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing Conservation Areas and their setting.

### National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published on 27 March 2012, is the principal document which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It has purposefully been created to provide a framework within which local people and Local planning Authorities (LPAs) can produce their own distinctive Local and Neighbourhood Plans which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities. The NPPF should therefore be approached as a piece of guidance in drawing up these plans.

When determining Planning Applications the NPPF directs LPAs to apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development; the

'golden thread' which is expected to run through their plan-making and decision-making. It must be noted however that this is expected to apply except where this conflicts with other policies contained within the NPPF, including those relating to the protection of designated heritage assets (Paragraph 14).

Section 7, 'Requiring Good Design' reinforces the importance of good design in achieving sustainable development, by ensuring the creation of inclusive and high quality places. This section of the NPPF affirms, in Paragraph 58, the need for new design to function well and add to the quality of the area in which it is built; establish a strong sense of place; and respond to local character and history, reflecting the built identity of the surrounding area.

Section 12, 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment', Paragraphs 126-141, relate to developments that have an affect upon the historic environment. These policies provide the framework to which local authorities need to refer when setting out a strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment in their Local Plans.

The NPPF advises local authorities to take into account the following points when drawing up strategies for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment:

- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and preserving them in a viable use consistent with their conservation;
- Their wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that the conservation of the historic environment can bring;
- The desirability of new development in making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness;
- Opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

These considerations should be taken into account when determining planning applications, and in addition, the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities, including their economic vitality, should be considered.

As stated in Paragraph 128, when determining applications, LPAs should require applicants to describe the significance of the heritage assets affected and the contribution made by their setting. The level of detail provided should be proportionate to the

significance of the asset and sufficient to understand the impact of the proposal on this significance.

According to Paragraph 129, LPAs are also obliged to identify and assess the significance of an heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal and should take this assessment into account when considering the impact upon the heritage asset.

Paragraphs 132 to 136 consider the impact of a proposed development upon the significance of a heritage asset.

Paragraph 137 encourages LPAs to look for new development opportunities within Conservation Areas, and states that developments which better reveal or enhance the significance of a designated heritage asset and its setting, will be looked upon favourably.

The NPPF follows the philosophy of PPS5 in moving away from narrow or prescriptive attitudes towards development within the historic environment, towards intelligent, imaginative and sustainable approaches to managing change. English Heritage has defined this new approach, now reflected in NPPF, as 'constructive conservation': defined as 'a positive and collaborative approach to conservation that focuses on actively managing change...the aim is to recognise and reinforce the historic significance of places, while accommodating the changes necessary to ensure their continued use and enjoyment.' (Constructive Conservation in Practice, English Heritage, 2009).

### 3- DESIGN APPROACH

#### 3-1: PROPOSED ADVERTS INSTALLATION

The property forms part of the Oracle Shopping Centre, with prescribed locations for signage allocated and approved by the Centre Management team and landlord.

The proposal is to locate signs within these locations, ensuring they are no to the detriment of the surrounding area.

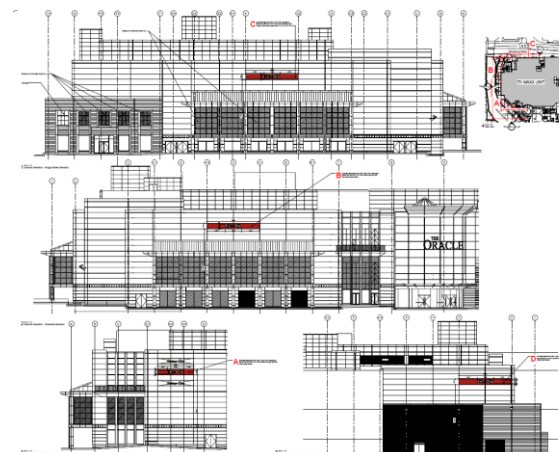
This includes a single sign to Bridge Street, one to Gun Street and two on Riverside elevation. In addition, a fifth sign is proposed to the stair/lift core within the roof top car park.

Signs located on Bridge Street and Gun Street are proposed to be non-illuminated to ensure no impact on St Marys Butt conservation area or residential properties on corner of Fobney Street. Specification will be an industry standard of aluminium fascia tray with fret cut pushed through letters.

The other signs will be the same specification but internally illuminated, to a reduced cadence level of 600 cd/m<sup>2</sup>.



Figure 3 : Existing shop front and signage



2 Proposed level 2 car park signage E

1

1 - Red (RAL 3001) PPC aluminium fascia tray with fret cut 10 mm pushed through opal 050 white acrylic letters internally illuminated. Approximate signage weight - 102kg (the sign is 6m x 1m)

Figure 4 : Proposed signage details