

20th August 2025
Delivered by email

Chief Planning Officer
Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices
Bridge Street
Reading
RG1 2LU

Ref: OP-16-25

Dear Sir or Madam,

Listed Building Consent, replacement of paintwork internal

This short planning note is submitted as part of a package of documents to set out proposals for the cosmetic refurbishment of Harris Arcade. The proposals purely relate to alterations to the existing paintwork within the Arcade, not including the Station Road and Friar Street frontages, which will be subject to a later, separate application.

To summarise the proposed work, the details of which are set out in a separate Specification of Works document, all internal surfaces will be repaired, sanded and repainted with 2 undercoats and an overcoat - Willow Tree by Dulux. Ceilings will be repainted white as existing.

To support the application forms and this short Heritage Statement, the following documents are submitted:

- Site Location Plan, scale 1: 1,250
- Site Plan, scale 1:250
- Existing and Proposed Visuals of Harris Arcade
- A Specification of Works Report
- Details/specification relating to undercoat, primer and top coat paints

Introduction, Site & Context

Harris Arcade, constructed between 1929 and 1931 for John Harris, is a covered shopping passage in Reading. The arcade forms an irregular L-shape, extending eastward from Station Road before turning north-south to connect with Friar Street.

The Station Road elevation is characterised by stone surrounds, bowed plate-glass windows with bronzed metal frames and pronounced stainless steel lettering to identify the entrance.

The Friar Street frontage is an adaptation of an 18th-century townhouse, preserving its Georgian character through stone detailing, bowed windows, and entablature, alongside similar pronounced stainless steel lettering to the entrance as seen in Station Road. Both entrances converge into the interior arcade and the location positioned between Station Road and Friar Street enables the arcade to contribute significantly to the town's historic character and group-value heritage context.

Opus Works Group Limited

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The arcade interior, to which this report relates, has retained its original terrazzo flooring with inlaid black borders. This is added to through the provision of a series of individual wooden-clad shopfronts with differing fenestration, bronzed window surrounds and decorative glazed skylights.

Historic England Listing

Historic England designated Harris Arcade as Grade II on 22 March 1957, amending this on 15 December 2021, to cover:

- 15 Friar Street and Units 1 & 26 of Harris Arcade; (original 1957 listing – 1113486)
- A new listing for Nos. 8-10 Station Road and Units 2-25 (additional 2021 listing – 1473816)

Reasons for Listing:

- Architectural interest: A well-designed, well-preserved early 20th-century shopping arcade in a consistent neo-classical style, incorporating an earlier façade.
- Historic interest: Reflects the evolution of an 18th-century townhouse into a prestigious C20 retail environment, contributing to Reading's urban morphology.
- Group value: Forms a cohesive heritage ensemble with neighbouring Grade II buildings.

A copy of the full listings relevant to Harris Arcade are provided in Appendix 1.

Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework

Under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), heritage-impacting proposals must:

- Describe the asset's significance;
- Assess potential impacts;
- Demonstrate harm avoidance or mitigation.

The proposed works to the arcade's paint finishes are entirely cosmetic, reversible, and restorative, which align with these national policy directives.

Reading Local Plan & Shopfront SPD

The Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) mandates the conservation of heritage assets through policies such as EN1 (historic environment protection) and EN3 (historic buildings). The Design Guide to Shopfronts SPD (2022) further advises:

- Respect for architectural details and material authenticity;
- Preservation of traditional finishes;
- Use of heritage-appropriate colours to sustain historic street character.

The works in this instance propose to restore and rejuvenate the Harris Arcade. Repainting with an appropriate heritage palette is considered to comply with local planning guidance in this respect.

The Proposed Works

Further detail is set out in the Specification of Works, which is submitted in support of the application, but works can be summarised as follows:

- Careful stripping and sanding of existing paintwork;
- Application of a heritage-appropriate paint finish in keeping with the building's context;
- No alteration to original fabric, details, or features.

Heritage Assessment

In consideration of prevailing policy and the Historic England listing, it is considered that the proposals are minimal in nature and will provide visual uplift and improvement that is compatible with prevailing planning policy and the Arcade's Grade II listing. The works proposed will preserve the historic fabric of the arcade, enable conservation enhancement to reinforce the arcade's architectural prominence and its contribution to Reading's townscape.

It is considered that the works provide a number of conservation benefits, including:

- Preventive care, which prolongs the durability of finishes and reduces risk of more intensive future work.
- Improved character, which ensures the arcade will continue to enhance the area's historic identity.
- Demonstration of best practice and compliance with conservation guidelines, showing conscientious stewardship by the Applicant.

Conclusions

For the reasons set out above, the proposed works are fully compliant with relevant planning policy and ensure that there is no harm to this Grade II listed asset. As the works offer clear conservation benefits it is considered that the application warrants support and it is therefore respectfully requested that it is approved without delay.

Yours faithfully,



Jonathan Walton
Planning and Development Director

jonathan.walton@opus.works

Appendix 1: Listing Entries, Harris Arcade

15 Friar Street and Numbers 1 and 26 Harris Arcade, Reading

15 Friar Street and 1 and 26 Harris
Arcade, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 1DB

Listed on the National Heritage List for England. Search over 400,000 listed places
(<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>)

Official list entry

Heritage Category:	Listed Building
Grade:	II
List Entry Number:	1113486
Date first listed:	22-Mar-1957
Date of most recent amendment:	15-Dec-2021
List Entry Name:	15 Friar Street and Numbers 1 and 26 Harris Arcade, Reading
Statutory Address 1:	15 Friar Street and 1 and 26 Harris Arcade, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 1DB

This List entry helps identify the building designated at this address for its special architectural or historic interest.

Unless the List entry states otherwise, it includes both the structure itself and any object or structure fixed to it (whether inside or outside) as well as any object or structure within the curtilage of the building.

For these purposes, to be included within the curtilage of the building, the object or structure must have formed part of the land since before 1st July 1948.

[Understanding list entries](https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/understanding-list-entries/) (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/understanding-list-entries/>)

[Corrections and minor amendments](https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/minor-amendments/) (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/minor-amendments/>)

Location

Statutory Address: **15 Friar Street and 1 and 26 Harris Arcade,
Reading, Berkshire, RG1 1DB**

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

District: **Reading (Unitary Authority)**

Parish: **Non Civil Parish**

National Grid **SU7155873600**

Reference:

Summary

A shopping arcade dating from 1929-1931 built for John Harris and incorporating an earlier street frontage of a motor showroom which dates from before 1922.

Reasons for Designation

Number 15 Friar Street and 1 and 26 Harris Arcade are listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

Architectural interest:

* the façade to Friar Street includes the upper storeys of a Georgian house of four bays with refined architectural detailing; * the building also incorporates part of a well-designed and notably well-preserved example of an early-C20 shopping arcade, in a consistent neo-classical style.

Historic interest:

* as an example of a prestigious C18 house at the centre of Reading which was later transformed to include part of a C20 shopping arcade, reflecting the morphology of the town.

Group value:

* with 12, 13 and 14 Friar Street and 147, 154 and 155 Friar Street (all Grade II).

History

The land on which Harris Arcade was built was shown as a series of back gardens to the properties which faced Friar Street on the Ordnance Survey (OS) map published in 1879. The Goad Fire insurance map of 1929 shows the land to be under a variety of uses, including a large motor showroom facing onto Station Road, with top-lit garage space behind it, labelled ‘John Harris (Reading) Ltd. / Garage Repairs’. The property at number 15 Friar Street appears

to have been connected to the garage and is labelled as containing ‘oil and tyres’ in the basement. A note on the map reads ‘under alteration 1929’. By 1931 the OS map shows that the whole of the arcade had been built, conforming to its present L-shape and with entrances on Friar Street and Station Road. A photograph of the Station Road façade of the garage building taken in 1922 shows that the car showroom consisted of two single-storey blocks set at either side of number 12 Station Road, which housed offices for the garage. The two-bay block to the north still exists in this single-storey format and is now the Revolution restaurant. The southern block has retained its three-bays at ground floor level, the central one of which now forms the eastern entrance to the Harris Arcade. It appears that the two floors built above it in brick with stone dressings were added at the time of the alterations in 1929-1931. It is not clear if the ground-floor frontage to 15 Friar Street was built during the additions of 1929-1931 or if it pre-dated the construction of the arcade.

The garage was originally known as Great Western Motors and owned by Allen and Simonds. It reverted to this name after 1931. Its ownership by John Harris was relatively short-lived and appears only to have lasted between 1928 and 1931. Nonetheless it seems that the arcade was named after him.

The name of William Rowland Howell has been suggested as the architect responsible for the design of the arcade. Although there is no documentary evidence of his involvement, he had previously designed a showroom for Allen and Simmonds and was active in Reading up until 1938.

The garage continued to operate from the premises to the north and east of the arcade, and the Goad Insurance map of 1958 shows an entrance from Wiston Terrace to the east and the showroom in the single-storey block to the north of the arcade and facing onto Station Road in the premises now operating as Revolution restaurant.

15 Friar Street was the birthplace of Professor Goldwin Smith (1823-1910), the prominent campaigner against slavery in America and for university reform in England. He was responsible for the saying that ‘Above all nations is humanity.’ However, he also held views on minority faiths, race and women that were less tolerant or forward-thinking, by contrast.

Details

A shopping arcade dating from 1929-1931 built for John Harris and incorporating an earlier street frontage of a motor showroom which dates from before 1922.

MATERIALS AND PLAN: the street front to Friar Street has a stone surround with carved decoration and plate glass shop windows with bronzed metal surrounds at ground-floor level. The walling of the two storeys above this is of red brick laid in Flemish bond with stone dressings. Flooring of the arcade is of terrazzo and the skylights are of wood and metal with stained and clear glass panels. The arcade is of an irregular L shape with a shorter range leading east from Station Road and a longer range running north-south to connect with Friar Street. The portion of the arcade which includes 15 Friar Street and 1 and 26 Harris Arcade is at the far southern end of the arcade.

EXTERIOR: the street front to Friar Street has three principal bays at ground-floor level, the central one of which forms the southern entrance to the arcade. The shop windows to either

side of this are of bowed plate-glass. At left is a doorway leading to the upper floors. To either side of the frontage are wide, panelled pilasters with projecting classical motifs. The entablature above the front has a frieze with a central projecting panel that carries stainless steel lettering reading ‘HARRIS ARCADE’. The deep cornice above has regularly-spaced square blocks (mutules).

The floors above this, which were formerly part of an C18 town house, have four bays with horned sash windows of three by four panes at first-floor level and three by three panes to the second floor, all with splayed heads of gauged brick. To the top of the wall is a bracketed cornice and above this is a low brick parapet.

The arcade pavement is of terrazzo with inlayed black borders. Shop fronts have granite stall risers and plate glass windows, divided by panelled pilasters. The window surrounds are a combination of base metal and timber, all painted in a consistent imitation of bronze. Above the shop windows is a deep transom light which includes regularly-placed pivoting windows to supply ventilation. Decorative motifs cast into the metal and carved into the wood include guilloche and anthemion mouldings and paterae. The plaster ceiling of the arcade at its southern end is panelled. A plaque recording 15 Friar Street as the birthplace of Professor Goldwin Smith (1823-1910) is attached to the entrance front.

INTERIOR: the interiors of all of the shops appear to have been remodelled and contain few original fittings, although suspended ceilings may mask original features. The upper floors were not inspected.

Legacy

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System **38952**
number:

Legacy System: **LBS**

Sources

Books and journals

Morrison, K, English Shops and Shopping An Architectural History, (2003), pp106-108.

Other

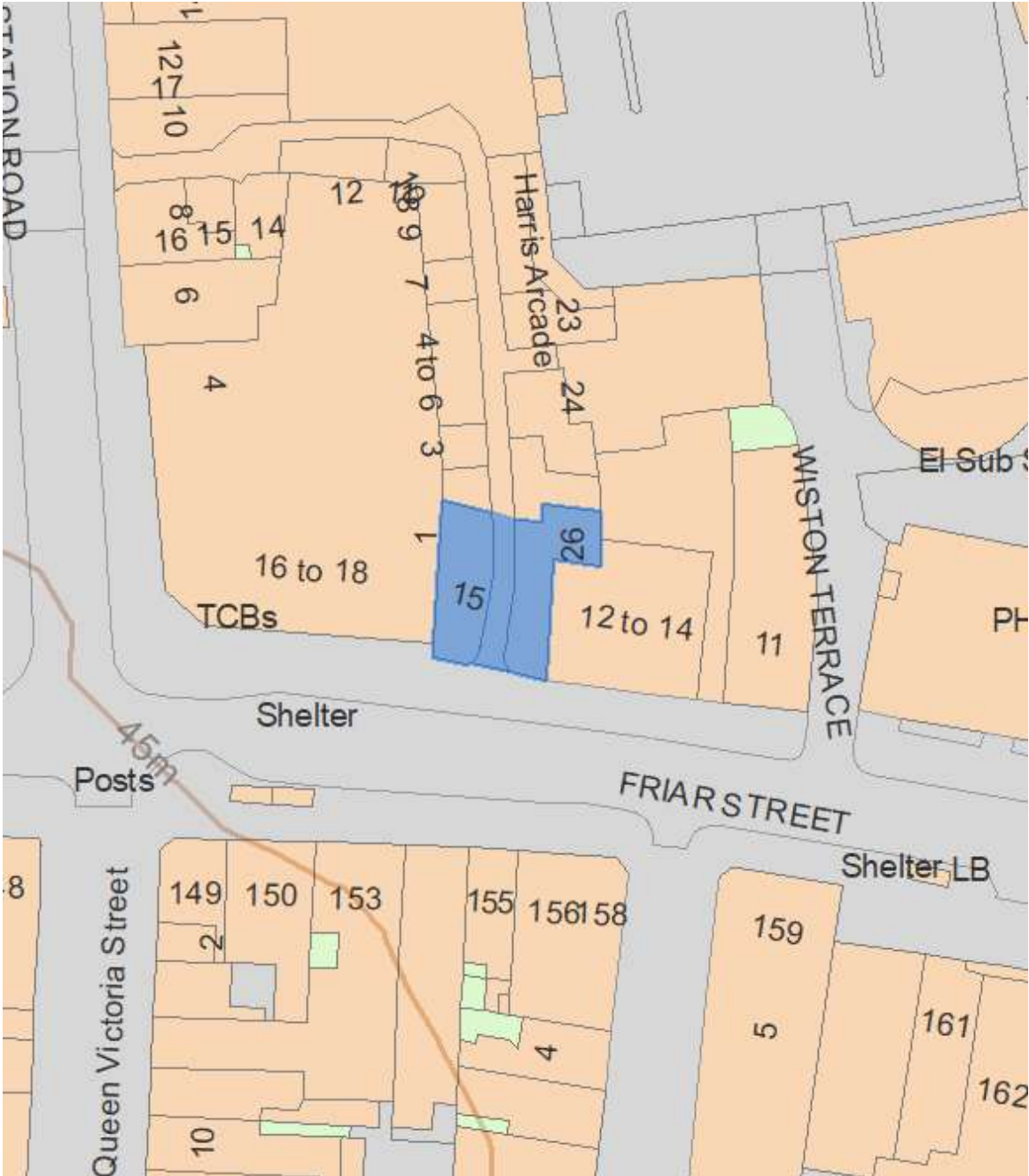
Chisholm, Hugh, ed. (1911). "Smith, Goldwin". Encyclopædia Britannica. 25 (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press. p. 262.

Glufurta, A and Greene, C, 'Trustees Vote to Remove Goldwin Smith, Who Held Racist, Sexist Beliefs, From Honorary Professor Titles,' The Cornell Daily Sun (2020)

Kent, Christopher A, 'Smith, Goldwin', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (2004).

Legal

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.



Map

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End of official list entry

Numbers 8-10 Station Road and 2-25 Harris Arcade, Reading

Numbers 2-25 Harris Arcade and 8-10 Station Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 1DB

Listed on the National Heritage List for England. Search over 400,000 listed places (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>)

Official list entry

Heritage Category:	Listed Building
Grade:	II
List Entry Number:	1473816
Date first listed:	15-Dec-2021
List Entry Name:	Numbers 8-10 Station Road and 2-25 Harris Arcade, Reading
Statutory Address 1:	Numbers 2-25 Harris Arcade and 8-10 Station Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 1DB

This List entry helps identify the building designated at this address for its special architectural or historic interest.

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[Corrections and minor amendments](https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/minor-amendments/) (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/minor-amendments/>)

Location

Statutory Address:

Numbers 2-25 Harris Arcade and 8-10
Station Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 1DB

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

District:

Reading (Unitary Authority)

Parish:

Non Civil Parish

National Grid

SU7154073629

Reference:

Summary

A shopping arcade dating from 1929-1931 built for John Harris and incorporating an earlier street frontage of a motor showroom which dates from before 1922, facing onto Station Road, all executed in a loosely Greek-Revival style.

Reasons for Designation

Numbers 8-10 Station Road and 2-25 Harris Arcade should be added to the statutory list at Grade II for the following principal reasons: Architectural interest:

* a well-designed and notably well-preserved example of an early-C20 shopping arcade, in a consistent neo-classical style.

Historic interest:

* as a C20 shopping arcade, which includes some of the best features of C19 arcades.

Group value:

* with 13 and 15, Station Road and Great Western House, Station Road (both Grade II).

History

The land on which Harris Arcade was built was shown as a series of back gardens to the properties which faced Friar Street on the Ordnance Survey (OS) map published in 1879. The Goad Fire insurance map of 1929 shows the land to be under a variety of uses, including a large motor showroom facing onto Station Road, with top-lit garage space behind it, labelled ‘John Harris (Reading) Ltd. / Garage Repairs’. The property at Number 15 Friar Street appears to have been connected to the garage and is labelled as containing ‘oil and tyres’ in the basement. A note on the map reads ‘under alteration 1929’. By 1931 the OS map shows that the whole of the arcade had been built, conforming to its present L-shape and with entrances on Friar Street and Station Road. A photograph of the Station Road façade of the garage building taken in 1922 shows that the car showroom consisted of two single-storey blocks set at either side of Number 12 Station Road, which housed offices for the garage. The two-bay block to the north still exists in this single-storey format and is now the Revolution restaurant.

The southern block has retained its three-bays at ground floor level, the central one of which now forms the eastern entrance to the Harris Arcade. It appears that the two floors built above it in brick with stone dressings were added at the time of the alterations in 1929-1931. It is not clear if the ground-floor frontage to 15 Friar Street was built during the additions of 1929-1931 or if it pre-dated the construction of the arcade.

The garage was originally known as Great Western Motors and reverted to this name after 1931. Its ownership by John Harris was relatively short-lived and appears only to have lasted between 1928 and 1931. Nonetheless it seems that the arcade was named after him.

The garage continued to operate from the premises to the north and east of the arcade, and the Goad Insurance map of 1958 shows an entrance from Wiston Terrace to the east and the showroom in the single-storey block to the north of the arcade and facing onto Station Road in the premises now operating as Revolution restaurant.

Details

A shopping arcade dating from 1929-1931 built for John Harris and incorporating an earlier street frontage of a motor showroom which dates from before 1922, facing onto Station Road, all executed in a loosely Greek-Revival style. MATERIALS AND PLAN: the street front to Station Road has a stone surround with carved decoration and plate glass windows with bronzed metal surrounds. Flooring of the arcade is of terrazzo and the skylights are of wood and metal with stained and clear glass panels. The arcade is of an irregular L shape with a shorter range leading east from Station Road and a longer range running north-south to connect with Friar Street. EXTERIOR: the street front to Station Road has three principal bays at ground-floor level, the central one of which forms the entrance to the arcade. To either side of the frontage are wide, panelled pilasters with projecting classical motifs. To either side of the arcade entrance are slender, panelled pilasters which have Ionic capitals. At right is a narrow bay containing a door which gives access to a staircase leading to the upper floors. The entablature above the front has a frieze with a central projecting panel that carries stainless steel lettering reading 'HARRIS ARCADE'. The deep cornice above has regularly-spaced square blocks (mutules). The threshold of the arcade at the Station Road end has a white marble block into which black lettering is set which reads 'HARRIS ARCADE'. The shop windows to either side of this are of bowed plate-glass. The arcade pavement is of terrazzo with inlaid black borders. Shop fronts have granite stall risers and plate glass windows, divided by panelled pilasters. The window surrounds are a combination of base metal and timber, all painted in a consistent imitation of bronze. Above the shop windows is a deep transom light which includes regularly-placed pivoting windows to supply ventilation. Decorative motifs cast into the metal and carved into the wood include guilloche and anthemion mouldings and paterae. The shop front of number 25 has two, shallow bow windows with multiple panes placed at either side of the doorway. Rectangular skylights with raised sides have stained glass panels of blue, yellow and clear glass. The passageway of the arcade widens at the point between numbers 14 and 17, and the change of direction from North – South to East – West occurs in front of number 10. INTERIOR: the interiors of all of the shops appear to have been remodelled and contain few original fittings, although suspended ceilings may mask original features. The upper floors were not inspected.

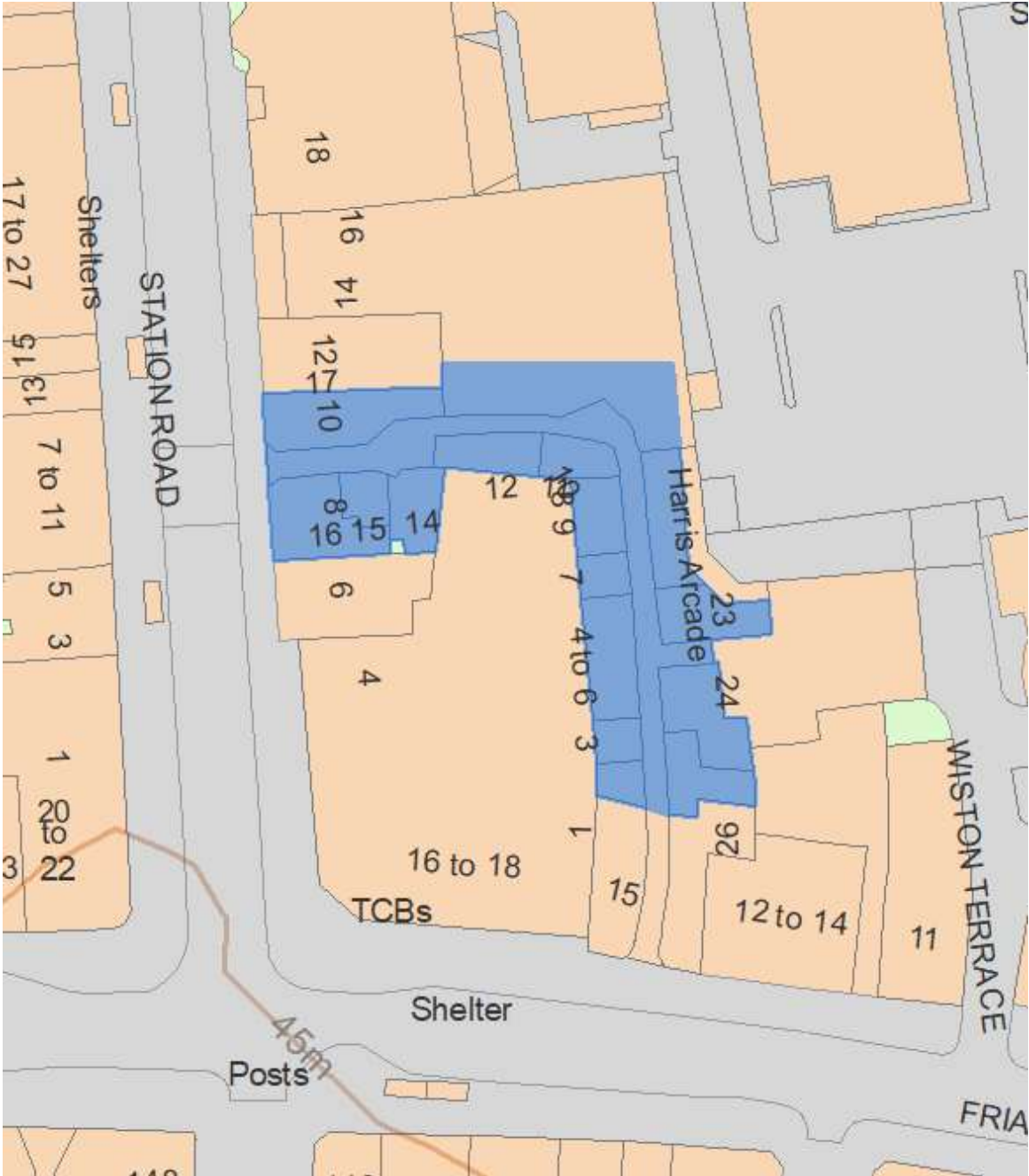
Sources

Books and journals

Morrison, K, English Shops and Shopping An Architectural History, (2003), 106-108

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