10 September 2025

Reading Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	**PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT**
Ward	Abbey
Planning Application Reference:	PL/25/0885 LBC
Site Address:	Town Hall, Blagrave Street, Reading
Proposed Development	Replace existing timber double fire door with a new metal double door.
Applicant	Reading Borough Council
Report author	Marcie Rejwerska
Deadline:	3 September 2025
Recommendations	Grant listed building consent, subject to conditions.
Conditions	1. Time Limit – Three Years 2. In accordance with approved plans 3. Materials as specified
Informatives	1. Terms 2. Building Control 3. Complaints about construction 4. Positive and Proactive

1. Executive summary

1.1. The proposal is to remove an existing timber double fire door which has rotted and is in poor condition and replace with a metal double fire door in a similar colour (grey). The Town Hall is Grade II* listed, and the door is located at the rear, adjacent to the Grade II listed Hospitium building.

1.2. The proposal is recommended for approval subject to the conditions as outlined above.

2. Introduction and site description

2.1. The proposal relates to external fire exit double doors at the rear of the site. These doors are not original and have no historical significance. The Town Hall is a Grade II* listed building. The relevant section of the official listing reads as follows:
The eastern front, facing the churchyard of the Church of St Laurence is partially masked by later buildings joined to the eastern end of the former School of Art and Science and forming neighbouring properties. The eastern side of the Victoria Hall (formerly known as the Small Town Hall) built in 1785-1786 by Charles Poulton can be seen. This has five windows placed behind gauged-brick relieving arches. These each have sashes of four by six panes and the space between their square heads and the

arches above was opened during the remodelling of the interior in 1863 by WH Woodman to give the windows arched heads that include a pattern of semi-circular and round panes.

The full listing description can be found on the Historic England register. The site is within the Abbey Quarter and the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area.

2.2. In accordance with the Constitution of the Council as the application is submitted on behalf of the Council it is required to be determined by Planning Applications Committee.

3. The Proposal

3.1. Listed Building Consent is sought for the removal of the existing timber double fire doors and replacement with metal double doors in a similar colour (grey).

3.2. Documents and plans received:

Revised Heritage Statement
Location Plan
Floor Plan
Elevations
Received by the LPA on 18 June 2025

Block Plan
Photograph of existing door
Received by the LPA on 9 July 2025

Titan Door Systems - S-series product brochure
Received by the LPA on 14 August 2025

4. Relevant Planning History

- PL/91/0804 - External sign (un-illuminated) in 250mm high gold Times Roman Typeface to read Gift Shop to west (Blagrave St) elevation. Application permitted.
- PL/01/0573 - Installation of 2no. vertical sliding sash timber windows, to be in keeping with existing windows, to the Earley charities room, including soldier courses above heads to match. Application permitted.
- PL/06/0052 - Exterior signage - 2 no. non-illuminated banners and vinyl lettering to doors. Application permitted.
- PL/06/0159 – Exterior signage - 2 no. non-illuminated banners and vinyl lettering to doors. Application withdrawn.
- PL/06/0198 - External signage - 2 no. external banners, signs and lettering to doors. Application withdrawn.
- PL/06/1330 - External signage - 2 no. external banners, signs and lettering to doors. Application permitted.
- PL/17/0987 - Internal alterations including, refurbishment of cafe and bar areas, replacement of bar area steps with new steps and wheelchair platform lift, replacement partition walls, refurbishment of toilets, replacement lighting and additional doors. Application permitted.

- PL/17/1223 - Erection of a galvanised walkway to assist with access for maintenance of ventilating plant to the roof of the Huntley & Palmers Gallery of the museum. Application permitted.
- PL/19/0327 - Installation of 1 x non-illuminated hanging sign, 1 x non-illuminated wall mounted sign, 1 x non-illuminated over-head doorway sign and 8 x window vinyls. Application permitted.
- PL/19/0567 - Installation of 1 x non-illuminated hanging sign, 1 x non-illuminated wall mounted sign, 1 x non-illuminated over-head doorway sign and 8 x window vinyls. Application permitted.
- PL/19/1632 - Retention of existing signs and interpretation panels on a permanent basis (application 170962) and proposed of extra directional signage in the Town Centre on a permanent basis. Application permitted.

5. Consultations

5.1 The planning notice was attached to nearby street furniture on 28th July 2025 and left in place for a minimum of 21 days (until 18th August 2025). A press advert was also published in the local paper.

No letters of representation have been received.

5.2 Statutory consultees:

- **Historic England** – No comments to make.
- **RCAAC** - No comments received.
- **RBC Conservation Officer** – No objections.

6. Legal context

6.1 Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the LPA to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

6.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

6.3 In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

6.4 Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (amended February 2025)
National Planning Practice Guidance (2014 onwards)
Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance 2008, Historic England
HEAG304 Listed Building Consent, Historic England Advice Note 16, 2021

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

Policy EN1 – Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
Policy EN3 – Enhancement of Conservation Areas

Other documents
Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal 2007

Local Plan Partial Update

6.5 The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. The submission draft of the Local Plan Partial Update was submitted on 9th May 2025.

6.6 Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become "out of date" when they are five years old. Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application and listed above is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remain very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the determination of this planning application and are not considered to be 'out of date'.

7. Appraisal

7.1. Policy EN1 states "Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings." Policy EN3 requires the special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas to be conserved and enhanced.

7.2. The proposed replacement door while not an ideal material choice, is considered acceptable in this case. The door is located at the rear of the site and there are no public areas from which the door might be viewed. There are some benefits to replacement with a more durable metal door, as will be fire resistant so potentially more secure and should require less maintenance.

7.3. Therefore, on balance, the proposal is considered acceptable.

8. Equality implications

8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2 The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that

the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this application.

9. Conclusion & Planning Balance

9.1 As with all applications considered by the Local Planning Authority, this application for consent is required to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

9.2 The proposal is considered to have no harm on the significance of the heritage asset nor the wider Conservation Area. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

Plans

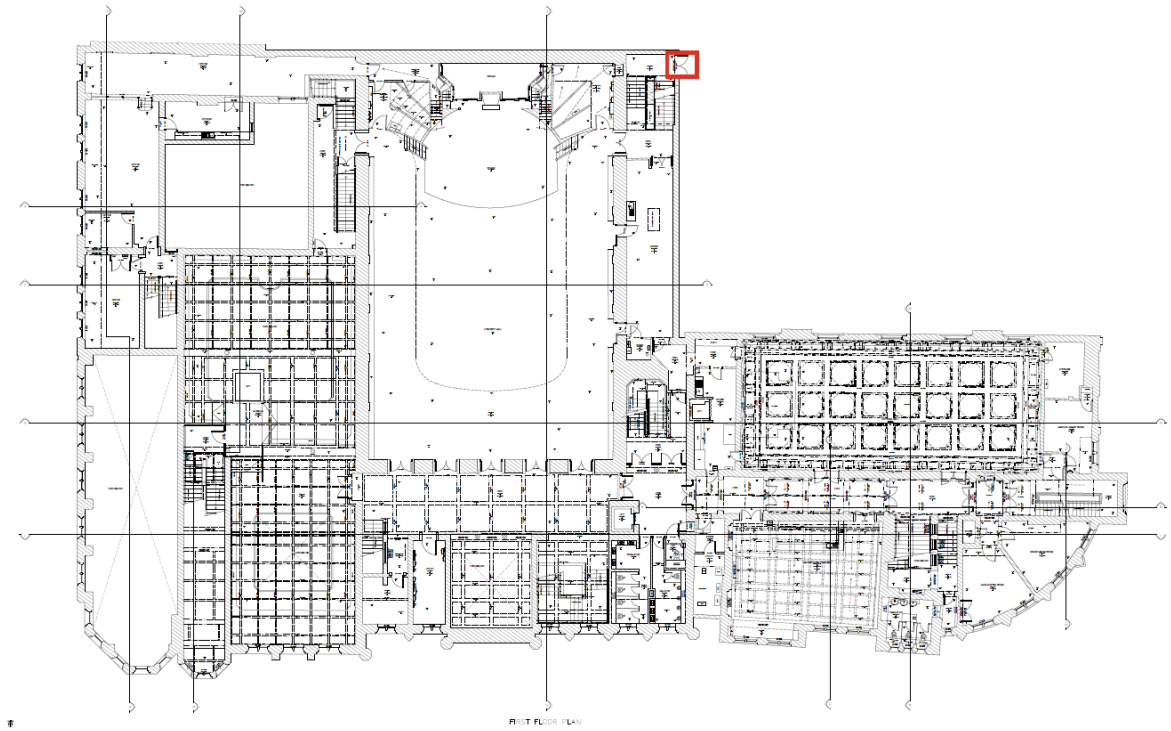

Figure 1 Floor Plan

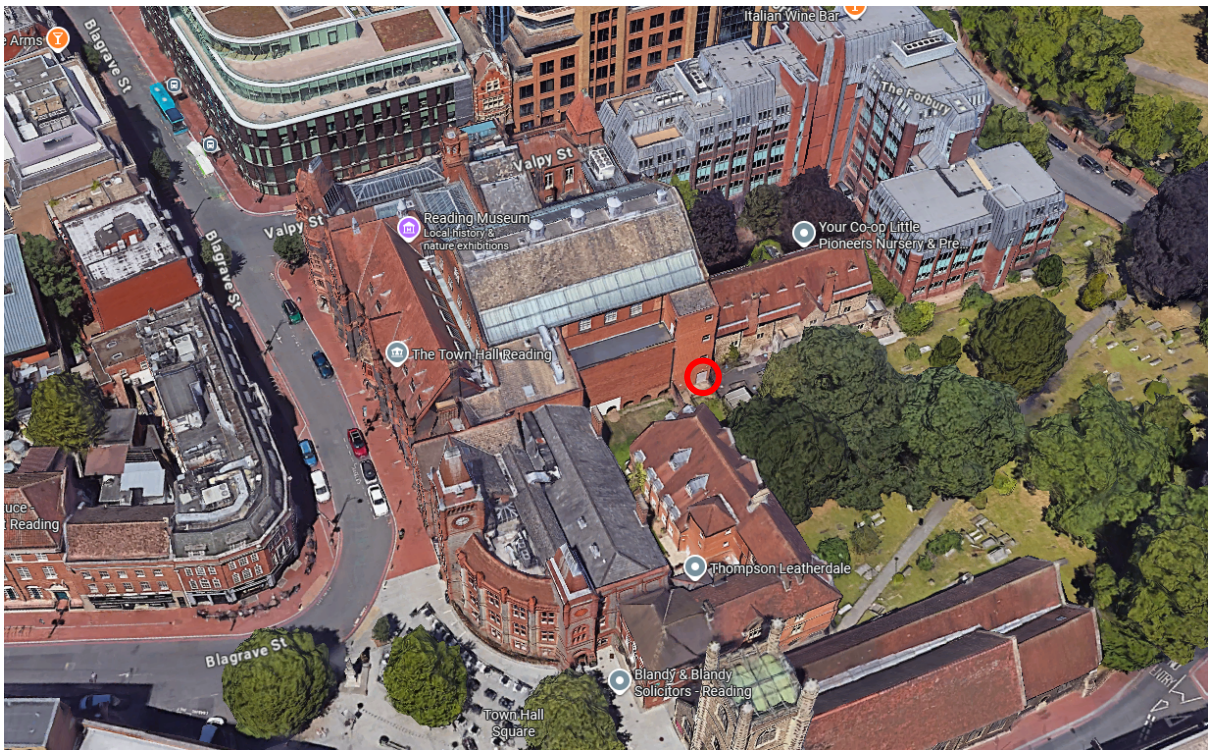

Figure 2 Location indicated on Google Maps

Figure 3 Photograph of the existing door submitted by the applicant

Figure 4 Example photo taken from the supplier's brochure