



HERITAGE STATEMENT

155 Oxford Road, Reading, RG1 7UY

Prepared for: Keen Partnership

The purpose of this report is to accompany a planning or Listed Building application. A heritage statement sets out the details of the history and development of the asset using photographic, map, archival and fabric evidence. It includes an assessment of the evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value of the heritage asset and the impact of the proposed works upon that significance. In addition to desk based research a site visit was carried out as part of this assessment and a non intrusive survey took place.

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155 Oxford Road, Reading, RG1 7UY

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Heritage Asset and its Setting:

Project Address: 155 Oxford Road, Reading, RG1 7UY

Local Authority: Reading Borough Council

Conservation Area: Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road

Archaeological Notification Area: *(According to the CAA, there has been limited evidence of archaeological significance in the area.)*

Building Use: Commercial/Residential

Listing Status: Grade II List entry no. 1113546

Designated Heritage Asset:

Scheduled Monument?	N
Listed Building?	Y
Registered Park and Garden	N
Historic Battlefield	N
Conservation Area	Y
World Heritage Site	N

Non Designated Heritage Asset	N
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Project Overview:

Conversion of the first floor of 155 Oxford Rd from offices to a one bedroom self-contained flat. Internal works only to accommodate this. No external changes.



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Photo 1 – View of front elevation (north)



Photo 2-5 – Streetview of property from Oxford Rd.



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Photo 6 and 7 – View of stairs to first floor and entrance to ground floor commercial space



Photo 8 – View of entrance to first floor space

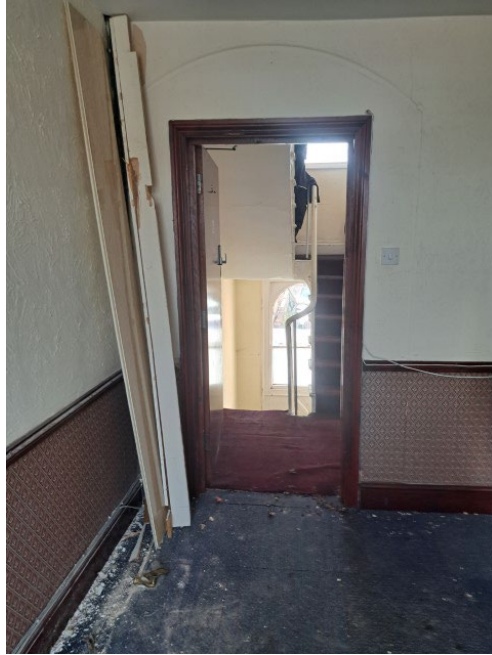


Photo 9 – View towards stairs on first floor



Photo 10 and 11 – View of first floor front rooms facing Oxford Rd.



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Photo 12 – View of first floor front rooms facing Oxford Rd.



Photo 13 and 14 – View of first floor rear room facing Goldsmid Rd.

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Photo 15 – View of doorway to first floor rear room



Photo 16 and 17 – View of rear entrance, south elevation

Drawings and Documents provided by Client:

List of documents provided:

-  9285-100 Location Plan
-  9285-101 Existing Block & Proposed Block Plan
-  9285-102 Proposed Site Plan
-  9285-103 Existing Ground and First Floor Plan
-  9285-104 Existing Second Floor Plan
-  9285-105 Existing Elevations
-  9285-106 Existing Side Elevations
-  9285-107 Proposed First Floor Plan
-  9285-108 Proposed Elevations
-  9285-109 Proposed Side Elevations

Schedule of Intervention:

In order to achieve the works, the following alterations/ interventions will be required:

- No change to the front or rear elevation. No changes to the roof form.
- No proposed extension
- Works to first floor internally only. No works to the other floors.
- No change to the existing staircase.
- Like for like refurbishment and redecoration of existing timber sash windows to the front and rear. Thermal seals fitted to existing sashes.
- Secondary glazing installed.
- Removal of modern finishes, joinery and skirting.
- Infilling of existing doorway from stairwell.
- New bathroom and kitchen including new finishes and sanitaryware. New timber partitions to form spaces. New drainage to connect to existing SVP that runs internally through the building.
- New fire lobby to enter flat.
- Kitchen and bathroom ventilation to come through existing roof on rear roof vent tile.
- Remove existing plaster to external walls. New insulating lime plaster to improve external wall u-values. Reskim internal walls.
- New skirting and architraves throughout.
- New fire doors throughout to replace modern office doors.
- New electrics throughout.
- New fire alarm system.
- New finishes throughout.
- Upgrading of existing ceiling with 2no. layers of fireboard and Rockwool between joists for fire separation between flats.

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Setting Overview/ Context:

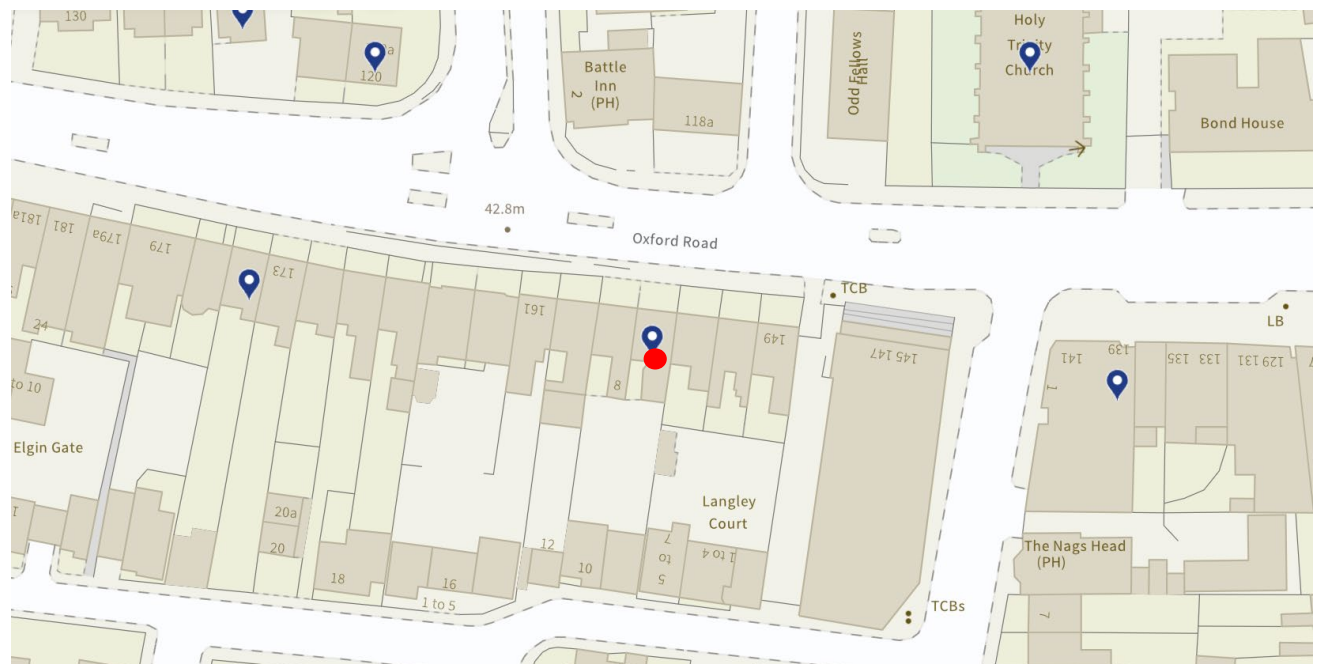
Oxford Road forms part of the Castle Hill/ Russell Street/ Oxford Road Conservation Area close to Reading Town Centre. No. 155 is in a prominent location situated on the south side of Oxford Road in an area containing a mix of residential and commercial properties. Oxford Road is one of the earliest roads leading out of Reading and is still a key route through to the town centre.

The property in question is Grade II Listed as part of a group of 11 no. two storey (plus basement) traditional terrace properties built in the 1820s. They appear to have been built as a single phase of red brick in a Flemish bond and a slate pitched roof with each property expressing a red brick chimney. The windows are painted timber sash windows which vary in the number of glazing bars present.

The ground floor of the property, addressing the Oxford Rd, contains a modern shop unit used by a hair salon. The adjacent property also contains a 20th Century shop front however most of the row remain as residential and have a low brick wall to the front providing separation to the front garden from the pavement edge and steps up to the part elevated ground floors.

The application relates to the use of the first floor of 155 which has been vacant for approximately 3 years but was used for offices prior to this. The rest of the property is used for residential purpose. There is a door providing access to the residential accommodation at the front and rear of the property. At the rear of the property the properties vary hugely in their past extension details and there is a car parking area laid to tarmac as is common along the block.

Setting: Urban Area



Map taken from Historic England Listing Database. Property shown with a red dot.

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Site Planning History:

PL/24/0748

Top Flat, 155 Oxford Road used as a self-contained dwelling for more than 10 years.

Decision: Approve

Received Date: 11/6/2024 Decision Date: 20/12/2024

PL/08/1631

Discharge of conditions 4, 5, 6 and 9 relating to permitted application 06/01525/FUL

Decision: Split

Received Date: 05/11/2008 Decision Date: 30/12/2008

PL/06/1123

Change of use from A2 (Offices) to residential to form 4 self-contained flats

Decision: Permitted subject to Legal Agreement

Received Date: 13/12/2006 Decision Date: 29/3/2007

PL/06/1122

Conversion from existing A2 use on upper floors to residential to form 4 self-contained flats

Decision: Approve

Received Date: 13/12/2006 Decision Date: 20/3/2007

PL/06/0943

Conversion from existing use on upper floors to residential to form four self-contained flats

Decision: Refuse

Received Date: 29/6/2006 Decision Date: 16/10/2006

PL/05/0449

Installation of 4 no. conservation roof lights to the front elevation.

Decision: Refuse

Received Date: 12/10/2005 Decision Date: 19/12/2005

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Impacted Heritage Assets:

The building sits within the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area.

The building is Grade II Listed.

Official list entry

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II List Entry Number: 1113546 Date first listed: 14-Dec-1978

Date of most recent amendment: 02-Jan-2024

List Entry Name: 149-169 Oxford Road Statutory Address 1: 149-169 Oxford Road, Reading, RG1 7UY

Location

Statutory Address: 149-169 Oxford Road, Reading, RG1 7UY

District: Reading (Unitary Authority) Parish: Non Civil Parish National Grid Reference: SU 70748 73368

Summary

Terrace of 11 houses built during the 1820s, converted to various uses during the C20 including shops and offices, now flats.

Reasons for Designation

149-169 Oxford Road is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

Architectural interest:

* as an early-C19 building which contributes to the character of an architecturally varied historic streetscape.

Group value:

* the building is in close proximity to a large number of listed buildings and forms part of a strong historic grouping.

History

Until the C19, most of the land west of Reading town centre was open farmland crossed by two ancient routes passing through the town from London to the West Country. Today, the northern of these two roads is named Oxford Road, while the southern is named Castle Street/Castle Hill/Bath Road. Inns and some isolated dwellings probably existed on these roads before the C18. Fortifications were built throughout the area by Royalist forces garrisoned in the town during the Civil War with some of the earthworks surviving into the early C19.

From the early C18, development slowly began to spread westward along Castle Hill/Bath Road and Oxford Road. John Rocque's Map of Berkshire (1761) depicts ribbon development along Castle Hill/Bath Road extending as far as the junction with Tilehurst Road, and individual houses within grounds along Oxford Road about as far as the present-day location of Russell Street. More comprehensive development of the area began in the early C19 and progressed gradually over the 100 years. Development spread further along Castle Street/Castle Hill, with some of the earlier buildings depicted on Rocque's map seemingly replaced. North-south link roads also were laid out across the market gardens that previously existed between Oxford Road and Bath Road. Terraced housing was erected in considerable quantities during the first half of the century to cater for a variety of social groups.

149-169 Oxford Road is a terrace of 11 houses built in the 1820s, during the westward expansion of Reading's inner suburbs along Oxford Road and Castle Hill. Nine of the houses are of matching design, being of two storeys plus basement across two bays, while 163 and 165 are symmetrically planned, taller, wider and more elaborately detailed than the other buildings. The group may have been built in a single phase of work. It was not uncommon for a builder-developer to produce a terrace with buildings of varying sizes and designs, to cater to a wider variety of prospective buyers, and to complement wider elements of the townscape – it is notable that the larger, symmetrical pair of houses terminates the view down Bedford Road. The terrace originally continued eastward as far as the junction with Russell Street, but the three easternmost buildings

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were demolished in the 1920s or early 1930s and a cinema was built in their place by the theatre chain, Gaumont.

Along with 171-177 Oxford Road to the west (Grade II-listed, NHLE entry 1156337), the terrace was originally named Sydney Terrace. It was erected prior to 1830, at which date a newspaper article advertised the sale of one of the buildings subsequently demolished to allow for the construction of the cinema. The terrace appears to have remained in residential use until the mid-C20, but thereafter, the history of each building has been greatly varied, mainly converted to flats or offices with shopfronts at ground floor level.

Every building other than 163 has been extended to the rear. Historic mapping shows that some of the buildings had been extended during the late C19 and early C20, but generally in a modest fashion. Some of these earlier extensions have since been demolished or replaced with later extensions. During the second half of the C20, the number and scale of extensions increased considerably, with two- to three-storey extensions being added to six of the buildings since the late 1940s, and three other buildings receiving sizeable single-storey extensions. Dormer windows have also been added to the rear roof pitch of seven of the buildings.

As built, the buildings had large rear gardens running back to what was then Junction Road but renamed Goldsmid Road between 1898 and 1909. Historic mapping shows that the buildings' frontages onto Junction/Goldsmid Road were gradually developed with outbuildings, some of quite a substantial size. Other outbuildings were built within the rear gardens closer to the terraced houses themselves. A detached house was built fronting Goldsmid Street at the end of the gardens of 167 and 169 during the 1920s. Several low-rise apartment blocks were built in phases between the early 1990s and mid-2000s, at the ends of the gardens of 149-65, fronting Goldsmid Street. Almost all of the rear gardens of 149-165 have been converted into car parks serving the historic terrace, the apartment blocks, or both.

Details

Terrace of 11 houses, built during the 1820s, converted to various uses during the C20 including shops and offices, now flats.

MATERIALS AND PLANS: the terrace is of red brick in Flemish bond with stucco dressings, a slate roof covering and iron railings. Two and three storeys plus basements.

EXTERIORS: the terrace consists of three distinct groups representing three different build phases. The easternmost group (149-161) is a terrace of seven houses of two storeys plus basements, under a pitched roof. The central group (163 and 165) is a symmetrical pair of houses of three storeys plus basements under a hipped roof. The westernmost group (167 and 169) is a pair of houses of two storeys plus basement under a pitched roof.

149-161 Oxford Road: the eastern group (149-161) are of a standard design although some have been altered through later interventions, most notably 155 and 157, where shopfronts have been installed at street level, infilling the basement area and merging the basement and raised ground floor. Each building is two bays wide with a cornice parapet unifying the group, and two courses of grey-blue bricks in header bond immediately above the flat arches of the basement windows running across the terrace, broken by the shopfronts at 155 and 157. Aside from 155 and 157, each house has a raised ground floor with steep steps with matching iron handrails leading to a front door within a round-arched recess in the eastern bay, and a window under a gauged brickwork flat arch in the western bay. All front doors are recent replacements apart from at 153 and 157, which have six-panelled doors. 151 and 159 have batwing fanlights, 153 has a spiderweb fanlight, and 159 has a plain fanlight with mid-C20 glazing. The window in the western bay of 149-153 is a six-over-six sash, while 159 has an eight-over-eight sash and 161 has a uPVC casement. The window and door openings at 149 have, uniquely, moulded stucco surrounds. On the first floor of each house, including at 155 and 157, there are two windows under gauged brickwork flat arches. They are glazing bar sash windows at 149-159 and uPVC casements at 161. At basement level, there is a single window in the western bay looking into a front area. All are uPVC casements apart from at 153 and 159, where they are renewed sashes. 149, 153 and 159 also have doors into the basement area.

The rear elevations of 149-161 have been variously altered and/or extended, but some retain sash windows, including round-arched sashes on the eastern bay of the first floor at 153 and 155, and partially blocked at 161. The rear basement area of all buildings has been either partially or completely infilled. At 149 there is a one-to-two-storey extension, of brickwork with flat roofs, along its eastern boundary, and a large dormer window on the western half of the rear pitch of the roof. At 151 there is a similar one-to-two-storey extension along the eastern boundary, as well as a long, single-storey extension along its western boundary. There is also a dormer window on the western half of the rear roof pitch. At 153, there is a single-storey, flat-roofed extension in brick along its eastern boundary. 155 has a large, single-storey, flat-roof extension along its eastern boundary, and a dormer window on the western half of the rear roof pitch, while 157 has a full-height (three-storey) extension with a hipped roof along its eastern boundary and a large dormer window on the western half of the rear roof pitch. Much of the rear garden of 159 has been developed, with a flat-roofed and rendered, two-storey extension along the eastern boundary connecting the main house with a two-storey, full-width extension with separate access from the rear of the building. At 161, there is a two-storey extension along the western boundary in brick, and a dormer window on the western half of the rear roof pitch.

163 and 165 Oxford Road: 163 and 165 are a symmetrical pair of townhouses, much larger and of finer detailing than the adjoining buildings either side. The pair are of three storeys across two bays under a hipped roof, with recessed, two-storey, single-bay wings to either side. There are two party-wall chimney stacks on the north and south slopes of the roof. There is a stucco plat band running at first-floor cill height across the entire façade, and a stucco string course running between each of the round arches on the raised ground floor. On the three-storey element of each building, there are two windows on the raised ground floor, first floor and second floors, and a doorway and single window into a generous basement area with the doors in an unusual, central location on the front elevation. On the raised ground floor, the windows are round-arched sashes, on the second floor are six-over-six sashes and on the second floor, 163 has three-over-six sashes and 165 has casements, possibly steel-framed. All windows at basement, first and second floor-level are under gauged brickwork flat arches. There is a large shop sign obscuring the arched heads of the ground-floor windows of 165.

The main entrances are located within the two-storey wings, and comprise a six-panelled door – partially glazed at 163 – under ornate batwing fanlights, set within round-arched recesses and accessed via a flight of stone steps with iron handrails. Above the doorways are a single, six-over-six sash window at first-floor level. The roofs of the wings are concealed behind stucco cornice parapets.

All of the windows on the rear elevation appear to have been replaced with uPVC units. The rear basement areas appear to have been partially covered over. There is a single-storey extension along the western boundary of 165. The combined rear garden of the two buildings is in use as a car park.

167 and 169 Oxford Road: the design of 167 and 169 is similar to that of 149-161, although 167 and 169 are wider than the more easterly buildings. The pair are of two storeys plus basement across two bays each under a pitched roof, with a cornice parapet unifying the elevation. The main entrance of each building is in the eastern bay of the raised ground floor, and comprises a six-panelled door under a batwing fanlight, set within a round-arched recess and accessed via a flight of stone steps with iron handrails. In the western bay of the ground floor is a single, six-over-six sash window. On the first floor of each building are two, six-over-six sash windows. The basement of 169 contains a single casement window while the basement of 167 has been converted into a shopfront with a fascia board and awning partially concealing the raised ground floor. All of the windows have gauged-brickwork, flat-arch heads. At 169, there are two courses of grey-blue bricks laid in header bond immediately above the head of the basement window, matching that at 149-161. There are tall, ridge chimney stacks of C20 brickwork in stretcher bond on the western party wall of each building. Both buildings have been extended to the rear along their eastern boundary, with that at 167 being of one to two storeys above ground level, flat-roofed and rendered or painted, and that at 169 being of one storey above ground level, in brick with a pitched roof. Each building has a single, late C20, dormer window on the western half of the rear roof pitch.

SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: 149-153 have late C20 or C21, low, front boundary walls of red brickwork in stretcher bond. At 159 and 161, the front boundaries are low brick walls and piers mounted with railings. 163-165 has a low wall with iron railings to the front boundary.

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Legacy
Legacy System number: 39095
Legacy System: LBS

Sources

Books and journals

Tyack, G, Bradley, S, Pevsner, N, The Buildings of England Berkshire , (1994), pp.438-440

Websites

Ditchfield, PH, Page, W, A History of the County of Berkshire: Volume 3 (1923), pp.336-342, accessed 9 August 2023 from <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/berks/vol3>

Reading Borough Council, History of Reading (2012), accessed 9 August 2023 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20120425235452/http://www.reading.gov.uk/residents/history-of-reading/>

The building is within the context of several Listed Buildings (see above).

Below is an extract from the Conservation Area Appraisal identifying the heritage assets within the immediate area.



6.1 Map Showing Heritage Designations within Character Area

-  Scheduled Monuments
-  Listed Buildings/Structures
-  Registered Parks and Gardens
-  Locally Identified Buildings (Locally Listed Buildings/Buildings of Townscape Merit)
-  Conservation Area

Assessment of Significance:

Heritage has cultural, social, economic and environmental values. The attributes that combine to define the significance of a historic building can relate to its physical properties or to its context. – BS 7913:2013.

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 – NPPF

Archeological: *As defined in the Glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework, there will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.*

There are no proposed ground works as part of this submission so below ground archaeology has not been assessed as part of this report.

Historic: *An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history, but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.*

Oxford Road (originally known as Pangbourne Lane), is one of the earliest roads leading out of Reading and has seen many phases of development as Reading expanded over the centuries.

The Listing description identifies the terrace consisting of three distinct groups representing three different build phases. The easternmost group (149-161) is a terrace of seven houses of two storeys plus basements, under a pitched roof. The central group (163 and 165) is a symmetrical pair of houses of three storeys plus basements under a hipped roof. The westernmost group (167 and 169) is a pair of houses of two storeys plus basement under a pitched roof. No. 155 forms part of the Easternmost group.

149-169 Oxford Road (of which this site is part of) is a terrace of 11 houses built in the 1820s, during the westward expansion of Reading's inner suburbs along Oxford Road and Castle Hill. It was originally known as Sydney Terrace.

In the census of 1901 the property is recorded as a single residential household occupied by 3 people with the head of the household being Mr William S Monger, a waiter at the local inn.

By 1911 a family of 6 live there with the head of the household being listed as Mr John Winter, a tailor.

The shop front to the ground floor appears to have been added after 1931 and before 1958.

All of the buildings apart from 163 and including 155 have been extended to the rear and this varies hugely in character, quality and detailing.

The property has no known association with historic persons.

The property is currently a mix of residential units and offices however the office element is vacant and has been for some time.

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Architectural or Artistic: *These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skill, like sculpture.*

The property is described as an early-C19 building which contributes to the character of an architecturally varied historic streetscape. It positively reflects the vernacular of the build period of this area of Reading in its details and materiality despite the extent of past alteration and has visual value as a group.

It is identified as being a positive contributor to the character of the Conservation Area and sits on a key view through the Conservation Area..

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Historic Mapping – For reference dating only, not for reproduction

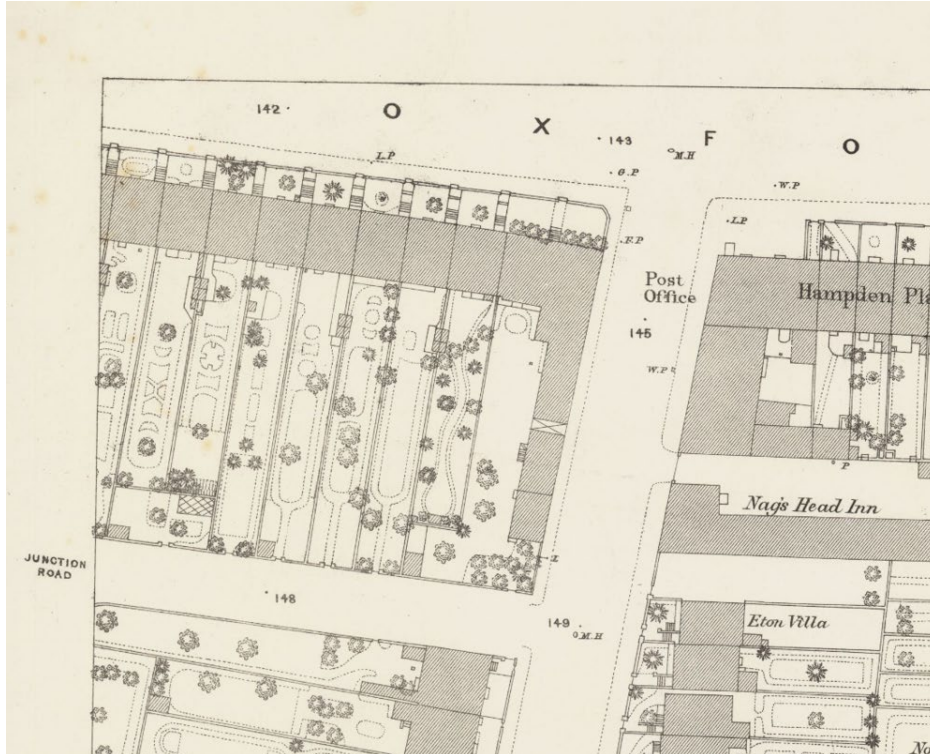


Extract from the Plan of the Parish of St Mary Reading, 1833



Extract from Berkshire XXXVII.3 1879

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Extract from Berkshire XXXVII.3.12 1879

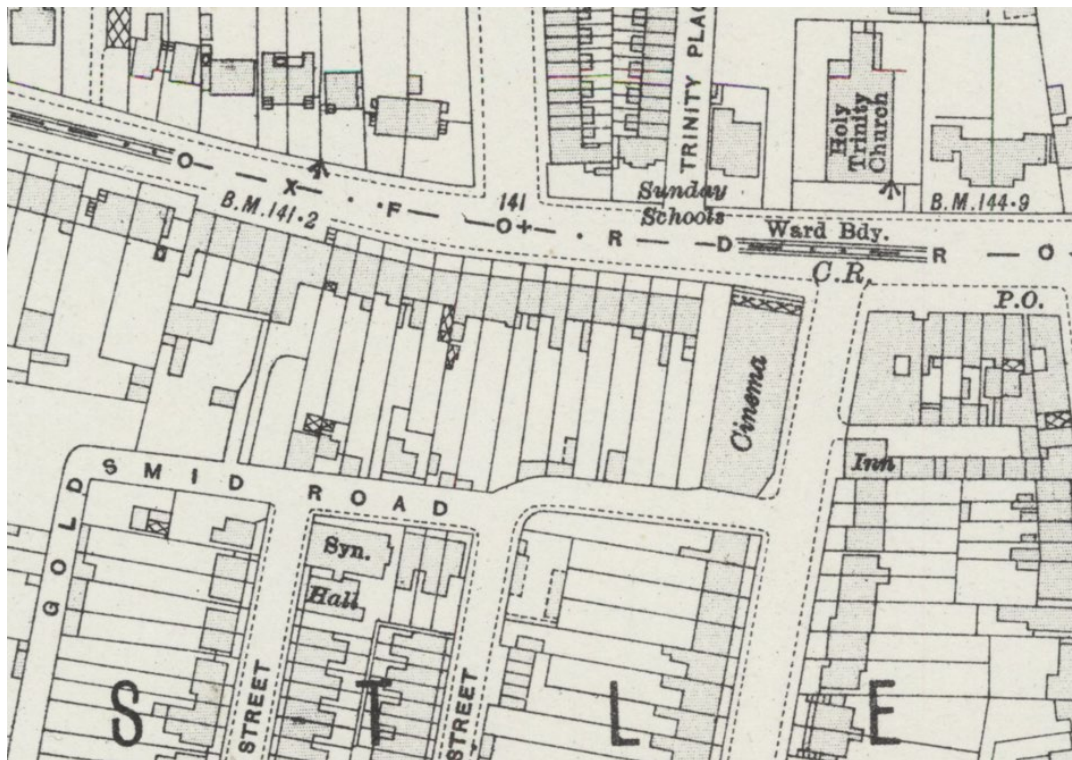


Extract from Berkshire XXXVII 1883

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Extract from Berkshire XXXVII.3 1900



Extract from Berkshire XXXVII.3 1931

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Extract from SU7073SE 1958



Extract from SU7073SE 1971

Development Impact on the Historical Asset:

An assessment of how the proposed works will affect the significance of the heritage asset and the justification for that impact.

Proposals should and do:

- 1 - Avoid, minimise and mitigate negative impact, in a way that meets the objectives of the NPPF.*
- 2 - Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance.*

Building Elevations and Setting:

There are no proposed changes to the building elevations and no proposed extension work and therefore no resultant visual impact upon the street scene. There is no visual impact upon key views through the Conservation Area as a result of the proposals nor any harm to the group value of this collection of buildings.

The proposed maintenance of the existing timber sash windows are of heritage benefit to the aesthetics of the Conservation Area setting as well as the Listed group of buildings.

Internally:

The proposed layout works with the existing plan form with only minor adjustments through the addition of additional timber partitions.

The building is physically capable of this proposed conversion work without structural intervention being required.

The refurbishment removes modern fabric that was installed during its fit out for office purpose and does not involve the loss of historic fabric or detailing. The doors lost for example are modern replacements and not original in nature.

Because of the existing use of the building, as residential, new bathrooms and kitchens can be connected to existing infrastructure, not requiring the installation of additional SVPs etc so there is no visual harm from the change of use.

Thermal upgrades to achieve the forthcoming rental EPC rating requirements should be achievable through the use of insulated lime plaster and secondary glazing without the need to install more harmful and vapour closed systems. Similarly the fire upgrade required for Building control compliance on compartmentation are achievable without material harm.

Scale and Massing:

There is no change to the scale or massing of the property as part of the proposals.

There are no proposed extensions.

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Archeaology:

There are no proposed below ground works so no known potential for impact upon any below ground archaeology.

Use:

The building is currently a mix of residential and commercial including a shop at the ground floor level. Due to the changing needs of the office rental market including accessibility there is no demand for the office unit and as such it has stood empty for approximately 3 years.

The conversion back to the original purpose of residential is logical in its nature and reflective of both the ambitions of Historic England to reinstate original purpose, albeit in the form of separate units, and the ambitions of Reading Council who require additional housing in this sustainable location. The current vacant nature is harmful to the existing building.

The change of use does not require external changes to the building however does encourage the repair and maintenance of the existing sashes in order to achieve future anticipated EPC rental ratings..

Relevant Policy:

The Government has set out its planning policies framework for the historic environment in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlining the framework within which local authorities should consider the importance of conserving, or enhancing aspects of the historic environment within the planning process. This was published in March 2012 and replaced in 2018, 2019, 2021, 2023 and 2024.

Conservation as defined by the NPPF is an active process of maintenance and managing change. It requires a flexible and thoughtful approach to get the best out of assets as diverse as listed buildings in every day use and as yet undiscovered, undesigned buried remains of archaeological interest.

In the case of buildings, generally the risks of neglect and decay of heritage assets are best addressed through ensuring that they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation. Ensuring such heritage assets remain used and valued is likely to require sympathetic changes to be made from time to time. In the case of archaeological sites, many have no active use, and so for those kinds of sites, periodic changes may not be necessary, though on-going management remains important.

Where changes are proposed, the National Planning Policy Framework sets out a clear framework for both plan-making and decision-making in respect of applications for planning permission and Listed Building consent to ensure that heritage assets are conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner that is consistent with their significance and thereby achieving sustainable development. The National Planning Policy Framework defines a heritage asset 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. Heritage assets are either designated heritage assets or non-designated heritage assets.

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. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. 'Significance' in terms of heritage-related planning policy is defined in the Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework as the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

All heritage assets have a setting, irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not. The setting of a heritage asset and the asset's curtilage may not have the same extent.

The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to the visual relationship between the asset and the proposed development and associated visual/physical considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part in the assessment of impacts on setting, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust, smell 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.

The contribution that setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset does not depend on there being public rights of way or an ability to otherwise access or experience that setting. The contribution may vary over time.

When assessing any application which may affect the setting of a heritage asset, local planning authorities may need to consider the implications of cumulative change. They may also need to consider the fact that developments which materially detract from the asset's significance may also damage its economic viability now, or in the future, thereby threatening its ongoing conservation.

Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of: (a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; (b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and (c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the 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.

Historic England 'Conservation Principles' deem new work or alteration to be normally acceptable where the proposals do not materially harm the value of the place. They consider the setting of the heritage asset to contribute greatly to its significance. They accept that a heritage setting changes over time.

The local authority may have location specific guidance also which includes policies which seek to ensure the protection of the historic environment and that development is of a high quality and seeks to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Heritage Asset. In assessing the impact of these proposals local guidance has also been considered.

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 196) requires that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing the optimum viable use of that asset. Where a heritage asset is capable of having a use, then securing its optimum viable use should be taken into account in assessing the public benefits of a proposed development. Public benefits should flow from the proposed development. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits, for example, works to a listed private dwelling which secure its future as a designated heritage asset could be a public benefit. Examples of heritage benefits may include: sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting, reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset, securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long term conservation.

Changes to the setting of historic buildings / Conservation Areas are to be sympathetic in terms of siting, proportion, scale, form, height, materials and detailing. All design work and procedures should follow guidance outlined in BS 7913:2013 Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings.

Conclusion:

The proposals bring a vacant floor of a Grade II Listed building back into functional use and reinstate its historic usage, albeit with the property broken down into more units than historically in place. Vacancy in a historic building is harmful in its nature both for the impact upon the investment in maintenance as well as the security and fire threat that it poses. There is net heritage gain from reinstating purpose.

The proposals have no impact upon the externals of the property and cause no visual harm to the exterior of the building. The proposed repair and redecoration of the existing timber sashes will benefit the visuals of both the group of Listed Buildings and the wider Conservation Area on a key vista.

The building is capable of conversion without structural intervention or new drainage or servicing pipework. The minor adjustments in the layout retain the plan form and are reversible in nature.

The upgrade to the interior with new finishes removes modern material installed in the past when the original office conversion took place and the proposed new doors, skirting, architraves etc will not result in the loss of historic material.

Overall the proposals are logical in nature and act in accordance with both national and local heritage planning policy supporting the building long term conservation.

Assessor Details:

Surveyor: Michelle Purnell BA(hons) BArch RIBA MSc Building Conservation IHBC

A site visit was undertaken as part of the site investigation in order to understand important relationships in the area surrounding the site. Date of Site Visit: 28/05/25 Weather conditions at time of visit: Dry

Information Source Checklist:

The following information sources have been used when conducting desk based research:

Historic England List of Protected Historic Sites x
National Planning Policy Framework x
Planning Practice Guidance: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment x
Relevant Local Plans x
Conservation Area Character Appraisal x
Local Authority Landscape Character Assessment n/a
The Local List of Buildings and Monuments x
Local Records Office Other (please state):