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Planning/Heritage Statement

Site Address:

A.B. Walker,
36 Eldon Road,
Reading,
RG1 4DL

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The proposal seeks to obtain consent for advertisement for:

“removal of existing signage lettering on exposed elevation to be replaced with 2 x fascia signs and replacement of freestanding sign with updated colour scheme”

1.2 This Heritage Statement has been prepared to accompany an application for advertisement consent at 36 Eldon Road, Reading. The premises is currently in operation as a funeral services business and is situated within the Eldon Square Conservation Area, a designated heritage asset recognised for its special architectural and historic character.

1.3 The purpose of this statement is to assess the potential impact of the proposed signage alterations, including the specific design and colour scheme, on the character and appearance of the conservation area. The assessment has been prepared with reference to relevant local and national planning policy, demonstrating that the proposal preserves and enhances the significance of the designated heritage asset.

1.4 In accordance with the councils checklist, this application consists of the following:

- Application form.
- Location Plan (1:1250)
- Existing & proposed elevation plans.
- Existing & proposed block plan of the site.
- Proposed Artwork.
- Heritage/planning Statement.
- Photos of the site.
- The correct Fee

2.0 Planning History

2.1 Planning history relevant to 36 Eldon Road, Reading, RG1 4DL:

- 2.2 **Application Number:** PL/06/0564
Application Date: 07/02/2006
Proposal Description: Refurbishment and extension to existing building to include an additional floor.
Decision: Withdrawn
Decision Date: 05/11/2008
- 2.3 **Application Number:** PL/06/1370
Application Date: 07/06/2006
Proposal Description: Refurbishment and extension of existing building. (resubmission of 06/00136/FUL).
Decision: Approve
Decision Date: 17/08/2006
- 2.4 **Application Number:** PL/07/0302
Application Date: 12/03/2007
Proposal Description: Refurbishment and extension to existing building to accommodate 2 new chapels and enlarge the mortuary.
Decision: Approve
Decision Date: 04/05/2007
- 2.5 **Application Number:** PL/12/1518
Application Date: 23/05/2012
Proposal Description: Second floor extension to form new training rooms.
Decision: Approve
Decision Date: 13/08/2012
- 2.6 **Application Number:** PL/12/1519
Application Date: 23/05/2012
Proposal Description: Second floor extension to form new training rooms.
Decision: Withdrawn
Decision Date: 13/08/2012
- 2.7 **Application Number:** PL/12/1559
Application Date: 22/10/2012
Proposal Description: Approval of details pursuant to conditions 3, 5, 6 and 7 of planning permission reference 12/00839/FUL.
Decision: Conditions Discharged
Decision Date: 18/02/2013
- 2.8 **Application Number:** PL/16/0335
Application Date: 23/02/2016
Proposal Description: Fell two Alder trees on the London Road frontage.
Decision: Agree
Decision Date: 14/03/2016
- 2.9 **Application Number:** PL/21/0862
Application Date: 25/05/2021
Proposal Description: Extension of workshop.
Decision: Approve
Decision Date: 27/07/2021
- 2.10 **Application Number:** PL/23/0020
Application Date: 09/01/2023
Proposal Description: Prune Plane tree in London Road to give 3m clearance from building.
Decision: Agree
Decision Date: 08/02/2023

3.0 Site and Surroundings

- 3.1 The site occupies a prominent corner plot at the junction of Eldon Road and London Road. The two-storey building accommodates a long-standing funeral services business and features signage on both principal elevations, with a freestanding sign marking the corner.
- 3.2 The Eldon Square Conservation Area is distinguished by its 19th-century townhouses arranged around a formal square, with commercial uses present along London Road and its adjoining streets. Signage in these peripheral areas reflects the gradual evolution of the conservation area while providing active frontages to one of Reading's key arterial routes.

4.0 Proposed Development

- 4.1 The application seeks consent for:
- 4.2 Replacement of the existing individually cut letters with **painted aluminium tray fascia signs** in **RAL 5026 (dark/navy blue matte finish)**, featuring text in **RAL 3012 (terracotta)**, to both the Eldon Road and London Road elevations.
- 4.3 Replacement of the existing corner freestanding sign with a **slightly enlarged freestanding sign**, maintaining the same location at the junction of Eldon Road and London Road, adopting the same **RAL 5026 background with RAL 3012 text** for consistency.
- 4.4 The chosen colour palette — a muted dark/navy background with terracotta text — is deliberately restrained and traditional in tone. The deep matte blue provides a subtle backdrop that reduces visual dominance, while the terracotta lettering offers legibility and contrast without resorting to stark or intrusive colours. The use of these tones is consistent with historic colour schemes and complements the materiality and brickwork typical of buildings within the Eldon Square Conservation Area.

5.0 Heritage Significance and Impact Assessment

5.1 Significance of the Eldon Square Conservation Area

5.2 The Eldon Square Conservation Area is significant for its:

- 5.2.1 Cohesive architectural style, dominated by Georgian and Victorian brick terraces;
- 5.2.2 Historic urban form centred on the formal square;
- 5.2.3 Use of muted, natural, and traditional colour palettes across façades and shopfronts, which contribute to a harmonious streetscape.

5.3 Impact of the Proposals

- 5.3.1 The proposed fascia trays and freestanding sign are designed with high-quality, durable finishes that respect the conservation area's character. The selected colour scheme is particularly important in mitigating visual impact:
- 5.3.2 **RAL 5026 matte dark/navy blue** provides a sophisticated, recessive background colour that sits comfortably alongside the traditional brick tones of surrounding properties.
- 5.3.3 **RAL 3012 terracotta** lettering offers a warm and muted accent, reflecting traditional pigment-based colours historically used in signage and architectural details.
- 5.4 Together, these colours avoid the starkness of pure whites or high-gloss finishes and ensure that the signage reads as an integrated element rather than an intrusive feature. The slightly enlarged freestanding sign, while modestly increasing in size, remains proportionate to the site's corner location and is visually balanced by the restrained colour palette.
- 5.5 The proposals therefore sustain the special interest of the Eldon Square Conservation Area, ensuring that the building continues to contribute positively to the streetscape while maintaining its commercial function.

6.0 Design Rationale and Colour Justification

- 6.1 Historic colour palettes play an important role in shaping the appearance of conservation areas. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, painted signage and shopfronts often employed muted, natural pigments derived from earth-based tones and darker base colours, which were less prone to fading and provided a dignified presence within the urban environment.
- 6.2 **Dark/navy blues** were frequently used in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods, often associated with professional services such as solicitors, banks, and funeral directors. Their depth of tone conveyed a sense of formality and permanence. The proposed **RAL 5026 matte finish** reflects this tradition by offering a recessive, durable backdrop.
- 6.3 **Terracotta tones** (such as **RAL 3012**) were historically used in signage and detailing to provide a warm, legible contrast against darker backgrounds. These muted reds and ochres relate directly to the clay brickwork prevalent in Reading's 19th-century architecture, creating a visual connection between the signage and its built context.
- 6.4 By adopting this restrained combination, the proposal avoids overly bright or synthetic colours that would appear incongruous within the Eldon Square Conservation Area. Instead, it references established historic colour practices, ensuring the signage feels integrated with the character of the area while maintaining modern durability and legibility.

7.0 Planning Policy Context

7.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023)

- 7.1.1 **Paragraph 199** requires that great weight is given to the conservation of heritage assets.
- 7.1.2 **Paragraph 200** states that any harm to a conservation area must be clearly and convincingly justified.
- 7.1.3 **Paragraph 206** encourages development that sustains or enhances the significance of heritage assets.
- 7.2 By adopting a carefully selected, muted colour palette with traditional associations, the proposal complies with these principles and avoids harm.

7.3 Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

- 7.3.1 **Policy EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment):** The signage respects the historic environment by employing sympathetic materials and colours.
- 7.3.2 **Policy EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas):** The restrained design and colour scheme contribute positively to local character and distinctiveness.
- 7.3.3 **Policy CR9 (Shopfronts and Signage):** The proposed signage meets the requirement for high-quality design, avoiding clutter and utilising materials and colours that are complementary to the building and surrounding area.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 The proposed signage at 36 Eldon Road represents a sensitive and proportionate alteration to an existing commercial frontage within the Eldon Square Conservation Area.
- 8.2 Through the use of **RAL 5026 dark/navy blue matte background** and **RAL 3012 terracotta lettering**, the fascia trays and freestanding sign achieve a high-quality finish that complements the surrounding historic built environment. The restrained design, combined with the modest scale of the freestanding sign, ensures the proposal does not harm but rather sustains the conservation area's significance.
- 8.3 The scheme accords with the NPPF (2023) and Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) policies, particularly EN1, EN3, and CR9, and should therefore be considered acceptable in heritage terms.

9.0 Eldon Square Conservation Area Map

