

COMBINED DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Abbey Ward

App Ref: PL/25/1033 Full & PL/25/1038 Lbc

Address: 25-26 MARKET PLACE, READING, RG1 2DG

Proposal: Retrospective planning application for internal alterations and external cosmetic alterations.

Applicant: Mrs Debbie Starbuck

Received date: 21/07/2025

Target Decision date: 26/09/2025 (EOT)

Case Officer: Marcelina Rejwerska

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is a Grade II listed three-storey building (Class E use). The national listing reads as follows:

Commercial terrace constructed in the early C19 to designs by Henry Briant (1813-1884) and Nathaniel Briant (dates unknown).

MATERIALS: the principal, east elevation is faced with rendered ashlar Bath Stone. The roof is slate and the rear elevations are exposed red brick.

PLAN: 23-26 Market Place comprises a single, four-storey volume divided into three properties. Owing to their shared convex east elevation, this volume is a quadrant in plan. The northernmost property comprises number 23, followed by number 24, with numbers 25-26 to the south.

EXTERIOR: the range is expressed as three properties, each two bays wide, with a shared convex east elevation. All three buildings have a largely glazed shopfront at ground-floor level with an entrance doorway at the intersection between each building. The three buildings are separated by coupled Doric pilasters with fluted capitals that span from the first floor to the building's parapet. The upper floors of the three buildings have a shared 2:2:2 ratio of fenestration bays. The windows at first-floor level are six-over-six glazing bar sashes set into neoclassical cases and topped by cornices with carved brackets. The second-floor windows are also six-over-six glazing bar sashes set into neoclassical cases but without cornices. The third-floor windows are square, three-over-three sashes. The building features a continuous parapet with a moulded cope at its apex and a cornice spanning numbers 24-26. Numbers 25 and 26 are spanned by two pitched roofs oriented east-west, with one over the front, eastern half of the building, and another over the rear, western half. The front (eastern) halves of numbers 23 and 24 are spanned by a continuous hipped roof with its slopes oriented east-west, while the rear portion of both buildings is spanned by a flat roof. There are chimney stacks rising on the party wall of numbers 24 and 25, and between numbers 26 and 27. The rear elevation was not inspected. It is understood to contain various bays of fenestration, and a spiral staircase spanning numbers 25 and 26.

It is important to note that nos. 23 and 24 are no longer separate units on the ground floor.

The property is also located within the Primary Shopping Area, Abbey Quarter Area and the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. It is also a designated primary frontage.



2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Retrospective planning permission and Listed Building Consent are sought for internal alterations to facilitate the new use of the property as an escape room with four themed game rooms. The alterations comprise new timber doors and stud walls formed of timber framing with plasterboard to create the game rooms, new timber suspended ceilings and floor coverings over the existing to facilitate set dressing, new WC in the basement to replace the existing kitchen. At the time of this application, the works have commenced, including installation of stud walls and new flooring, however, this was paused to allow the planning applications to be determined.

External alterations are already largely complete, and these comprise of painting of the ground floor timber window frames and plinth below. The signage/fascia is assessed under a separate Advert Consent application.

a. Information submitted:

Design and Access Statement/Heritage Statement
25.MP.PLANNING 21.07.25 Existing and Proposed Plans and Elevations
Received by the LPA on 22 July 2025

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- PL/25/1038 - Retrospective planning application for internal alterations and external cosmetic alterations. Not yet determined.
- PL/25/1033 - Retrospective planning application for internal alterations and external cosmetic alterations. Not yet determined.
- PL/22/0545 - Change of use of 27-28, 29-31 and 32 Market Place at first, second and third floors to provide 8 residential units, retention of flexible Class E uses at ground and basement floors of 27-28 and 32 Market Place, retention of 260.4 sqm as a public house (Sui Generis use) at basement and ground floor of 29-31 Market Place with associated external works, landscaping, plant and cycle store. 27-32 Market Place: Demolition of 20th Century additions to the rear of 29- 31 Market Place and 32 Market Place with associated internal and external alterations to listed buildings. Application permitted.
- PL/05/1123 - Removal of 5 mullions and transoms from front window, no material change. Application refused.
- PL/05/0440 – Removal of 5 mullions and transoms from front window. Application withdrawn.

- PL/05/1193 - Internal repairs in the basement including removal of damp affected plaster and repairing underlying brickwork, isolated structural timber repairs and erection of pigeon netting to rear elevation. Application permitted.
- PL/03/0016 – Change the existing fascia. Application permitted.
- PL/03/0081 – Change existing fascia. Application permitted.
- PL/03/0185 – Re-opening of two existing door openings which connect 27-28 and 25-26 Market Place for access. Application permitted.
- PL/89/0625 – Cut out Perspex letters on S/O fixings and replacement inlay panels. Application refused.
- PL/89/0626 – Installation of cut out Perspex letters and logo on S/O fixings on fascia, installation of panels in shopfront. Application refused.
- PL/25/1037 ADV - New timber fascia with applied vinyl logo (amended description). Application not yet determined.

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

- RBC Conservation Officer – No objections subject to recommended conditions.
- RCAAC – No comments received.

Site notices were displayed on nearby street furniture. No letters of representation were received.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

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.

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).

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Practice Guidance

Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance, Historic England 2008

HEAG125 Listed Buildings and Curtilage

HEAG304 Listed Building Consent

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

EN3: ENHANCEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS

OU5: SHOPFRONTS AND CASH MACHINES

CR1: DEFINITION OF CENTRAL READING

CR2: DESIGN IN CENTRAL READING

CR15: THE READING ABBEY QUARTER

Other

Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal 2007

Equality Act 2010:

In determining this application, the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore, in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

6. APPRAISAL

Character and design

Policy EN1 requires proposals to protect and, where possible, enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, as well as the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Policy EN3 similarly requires development to enhance the appearance and significance of conservation areas. Policies CC7 and CR2 are also relevant and require high quality design.

The external alterations proposed are considered sympathetic to the character and appearance of the property. Photographs of the site show that the shopfront would have historically been painted in black. As such, the external works are considered acceptable.

Internally, the proposed works are sensitively planned to have no impact on the original historic fabric, and to be lightweight and easily reversible. This is considered acceptable in this case, and the proposal is considered acceptable, subject to conditions.

Overall, the proposal is considered in accordance with Policies CC7, EN1, EN3 and CR2 of the Reading Local Plan.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposal has been assessed in relation to national and locally adopted policies and is considered in accordance with those policies.

8. RECOMMENDATION

GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION
GRANT LISTED BUILDING CONSENT

Recommended conditions (Full):

1. Time Limit (standard)
2. Approved Plans
3. Materials as specified

Recommended conditions (Lbc):

1. Time Limit (standard)
2. Approved Plans & Schedule
3. Materials as specified
4. Original features internally and externally to not be disturbed