

Heritage Statement – Chimney Access and Live Bee Hive Removal

Property: 12 Abbots Walk, Reading, RG1 3HW

Designation: Grade II Listed Building (List Entry No. 1113391)

Applicant: Andrew Whisker

Date: 03/03/2026

1. Introduction / Description of Proposed Works

This statement accompanies a Listed Building Consent application for the essential removal of a live bee hive from a chimney stack and the temporary erection of scaffolding to facilitate these works.

The chimney stack in question is located on the boundary wall directly adjacent to the Reading Abbey Ruins. Due to the position of the stack, safe access can only be achieved by erecting temporary scaffolding within the perimeter of the Abbey Grounds. The works involve:

- The professional, non-destructive removal/relocation of a live bee colony.
- Temporary scaffolding to provide safe access to the chimney pot/flue.
- Minor preventative measures (e.g., breathable mesh or cowls) to prevent re-infestation, if required.

2. Significance of the Heritage Asset

12 Abbots Walk (Grade II, List Entry No. 1113391) is an early-19th-century townhouse. Its primary significance lies in its architectural character, traditional brick construction, and its immediate physical and contextual relationship with the **Reading Abbey Ruins (Grade I listed and Scheduled Monument)**.

The chimney stack forms part of the historic roofline that serves as a backdrop to the Abbey Ruins. Maintaining the integrity of the brickwork and mortar is vital to the preservation of both the building and the visual setting of the Scheduled Monument.

3. Assessment of the Proposed Works

The proposed works are restorative and preventative. The presence of a live hive within a historic chimney can lead to the accumulation of wax and honey. Over time, these organic materials can saturate the internal flue and seep through the **historic brickwork and lime mortar joints**, causing permanent staining and structural degradation.

Impact on the Abbey Grounds: The scaffolding is a temporary necessity. It will be erected as a free-standing structure where possible and will not be anchored into the Abbey's

historic fabric. Protective "sole boards" will be used under the scaffolding feet to ensure no compression or damage occurs to the ground surface within the Abbey precinct.

4. Justification

The removal of the hive is necessary to protect the fabric of the Grade II listed building from internal damage and to ensure the chimney remains functional.

The use of scaffolding within the Abbey Grounds is the only viable method for safe access to this specific elevation. This approach follows the principle of "**minimum intervention**"; the scaffolding is temporary, and the hive removal is a non-invasive procedure designed to protect the heritage asset without altering its character or damaging the neighboring Scheduled Monument.

5. Implementation and Methodology

- **Ecological Sensitivity:** A professional apiarist/bee removal specialist will be used to ensure the live relocation of the colony.
- **Scaffolding:** The scaffold will be erected by contractors experienced in working around sensitive heritage sites. No part of the scaffold will be anchored into or touch the masonry of the Abbey Ruins.
- **Protection:** High-visibility foam and protective boards will be used at the base of the scaffold to prevent any impact on the Abbey grounds.
- **Recording:** Photographic records will be taken of the chimney stack and the adjacent Abbey grounds before, during, and after the works to ensure all areas are returned to their original state.

6. Conclusion

The proposed hive removal is essential maintenance that preserves the special architectural and historic interest of this Grade II listed building. By removing the threat of honey seepage into the brickwork and using temporary, non-invasive access methods, the significance of the property and the setting of Reading Abbey will be fully protected.

Prepared by: Andrew Whisker

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