Heritage Statement

Part Retrospective Application for Advertising Consent and Shutters to External Façade

at

2 Kings Road
Reading
Berkshire
RG1 3AD

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Introduction

This Heritage Statement and Impact Assessment has been produced to support the part retrospective planning application for advertising consent and the installation of shutters to the ground floor of to 2-4 Kings Road, Abbey Corner, Reading.

2-4 Kings Road is located on the prominent Abbey Corner within Reading Town Centre (Market Place/London Street) Conservation Area and, whilst the building is not listed or locally listed, it is located in close proximity to a number of listed buildings. The building itself dates from the late 20th Century and is currently part occupied by a public health body.

This Heritage Statement and Impact Assessment establishes the historic development and significance of the building to inform the assessment of the impact of the proposed internal alterations on that significance. It has been formulated using the assessment methodology contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (paragraphs 194, 195, 197, 199, 201) and local planning policies within the Reading Borough Local Plan and Market Place/London Street Conservation Area

It also takes account of the relevant Historic England guidance, most notably their best practice guidance document, Conservation Principles (2008 and revised 2017).

Designated Heritage Assets

The distribution of Listed Buildings in 100m of the site is shown in the aerial map above

2-4 Kings Road is located on the corner of Kings Road and Kings Street. Whilst the building itself is not listed nor locally listed, it is located within a conservation area and is in close proximity to a number of listed buildings. Not all have been identified in the map above, however the highlighted buildings are within 100m of the site.

The heritage assets around the site are given in the table and shown on the above plan:

Number on Plan	Name	Designation
1	Market Place/London Street Conservation Area (In Yellow)	Conservation Area
2	2-4 Kings Road (Application Site)	Not Listed
3	17-18 King Street	Grade II
4	George Hotel	Grade II
5	2-3 Broad Street	Grade II
6	Barclays Bank	Grade II
7	7 High Street, The High, 1-2 Market Place	Grade II

Setting and Context

Whilst 2-4 Kings Road is not the tallest building within the streetscape, its locality on the prominent Abbey Corner has resulted in it being a marker visible within views across the town centre. This has been highlighted below.

Aerial view of 2-4 Kings Road looking East

Aerial view of 2-4 Kings Road looking West

Heritage Appraisal: Market Place/London Street Conservation Area

1960's Photo of Reading Town Centre

The conservation area is characterised as a linear area following the 12th century southern approach road to the town. The buildings are of two to four storeys, with the taller generally being located around Market Place. The area immediately around Abbey Hall is formed of buildings with similar heights and massing, but which vary somewhat in style and materials. The most common facing material is brick and the colour varies, polychromatic brickwork being particular to Reading. Continuing east along King's Road there are few historic buildings, the road is lined with modern office buildings and immediately to the east is the Central Library.

Throughout the conservation area modern development, both infill and roof extensions, have taken place which has added a variety of form and design to the town centre interspersing the historic with the contemporary.

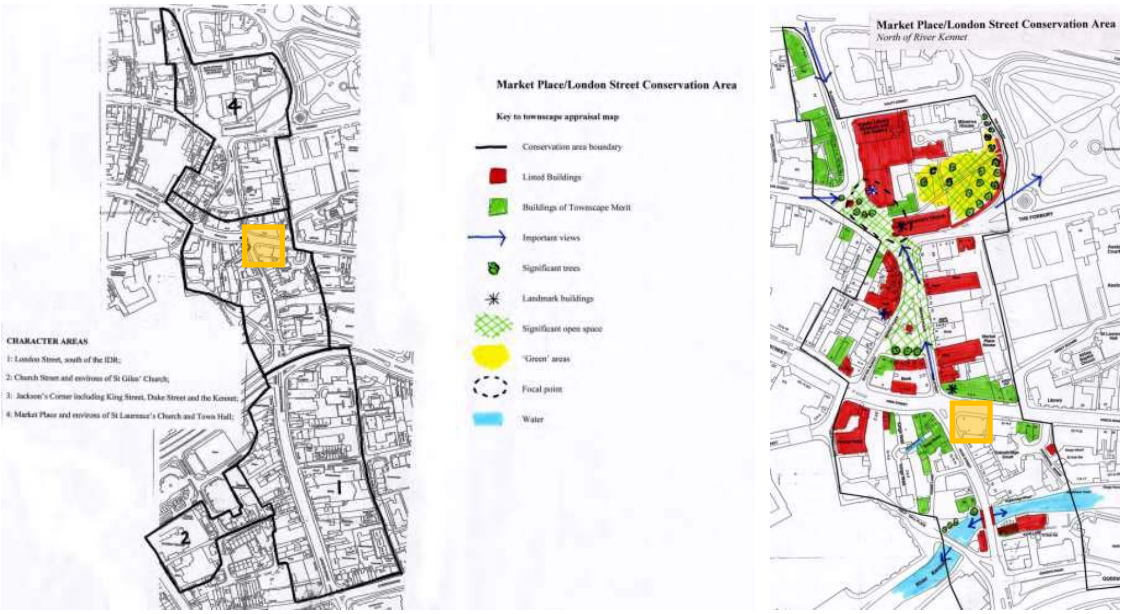
2-4 Kings Road is located within Character Area 3 of Market Place/London Street Conservation Area and has been highlighted on the map below. This character area has a number of listed buildings, buildings of townscape merit, important views, and focal points. The conservation area appraisal describes the character area as the following:

'This is the least homogenous of the four character areas but represents the transition from central core shopping area to other uses including hotel, casino and office use as one progresses towards London Street. The area can be divided into riverside development beside the Kennet and urban development around Jacksons Corner. From Yield Hall Place the area is dominated by the bulk of the Oracle Shopping Centre.

High Bridge, built over the Kennet in 1787, stands just upstream from a narrow modern bridge built approximately 200 years later. The close proximity of the two bridges typifies the close mix of old and new development that characterises this part of the area.

Jacksons Corner is a spacious cross-roads where curved late 19th century corner buildings such as 1-9 King's Road (Jacksons) and 2 Duke Street/25 King Street (Jacobs) have been designed to take account of their prominent location.

A modern shopping mall (Kings Walk) and modern development on the east side of the Duke Street/King's Road junction is out of character with the historic form and layout of the area.'



Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Boundary (right)- 2-4 Kings Road is highlighted in orange and is located in Character Area 3 (above left). Note that it is not identified as an important building/building of merit

Heritage Appraisal: 2-4 Kings Road, Abbey Corner

2-4 Kings Road situated on the prominent Abbey Corner- note the ground floor fenestration of little/no architectural merit

2-4 Kings Road is a late 20th century brick building of utilitarian design located on a prominent corner within Reading Town Centre. The building itself is of little architectural merit, being predominantly functional in its design as a late 20th century office building. An 1895 (Figure 20) map does suggest that a building was present on site at this time, however it is likely that this was demolished/extended/refaced and rebuilt to accommodate the one standing today.

Internally the building has been subdivided across 5 floors (additional storey under construction) to provide office space and residential accommodation. There is no historic merit to the internal fabric of the building.

To the south the building is abutted by similar blocks of offices and apartments dating from the same period. However to the north, east and west 2-4 Kings Road is surrounded by a number of listed buildings and buildings of townscape merit.

2-4 Kings Road does not sit within any important views as identified in the conservation area, however it is at the junction where important views and focal points have been identified.

The significance of 2-4 Kings Road lies in its locality as a principal building on an important visual focal corner in the centre of the conservation area. Its architectural design is limited and as such the building makes a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the area.

Critical Assessment

The assessment of significance is based on the characteristic of heritage values as expressed by Historic England in Conservation Principles (2008 Revised 2017), which defines value as 'an aspect of worth or importance...attached by people to qualities of place'.

Heritage Value: Evidential	Rating: Negligible
Explanation: 2-4 Kings Road: Given the location of the site in the centre of Reading there is potential for archaeology underneath the building however this is not visible on the ground.	
Heritage Value: Historical	Rating: Negligible
Explanation: 2-4 Kings Road: The building is a late 20th/early 21st century office block which, whilst illustrating the societal changes of economic demand within the town, does not impact the historic significance of the Town Centre overall.	
Heritage Value: Aesthetic	Rating: Neutral
Explanation: 2-4 Kings Road: The design of the building is utilitarian and built for purpose as such any architectural detailing is limited. The overall aesthetic of the building is that of a typical late 20th century office block however given the various adjacent designated and non-designated heritage assets around the site the building does little in way of contributing to their setting or character.	
Heritage Value: Communal	Rating: Conservation Area
Explanation: 2-4 Kings Road: The building is part of a privately owned site for commercial employment and residential accommodation. There is no communal value.	

Summary of Significance

The evidential, historic, and communal value of the site is considered to be negligible. The aesthetic value of the building is related to its locality and not its design. The materials are in keeping with character of the conservation area and the form does follow the topography of streetscape and mirror that of adjacent buildings. However given its location in the historic town centre in close proximity to a number of designated and non-designated heritage assets the aesthetic value and contribution 2-4 Kings Road makes to the conservation area is considered to be neutral. The area of development, the ground floor

as seen below, is of little architectural merit and makes a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Ground floor of 2-4 Kings Road, Abbey Corner

Impact Assessment

The proposals seek a to approve the existing signage as well as the shutters which have been provided to prevent break in, which has been a major issue in the area. We have included as part of this application a letter from Matt Rodda MP to Reading Council detailing security concerns along King's Road and Duke Street. Below you can see existing images showing the adverting and shutters.

There is an existing approval for conversion of the existing ground floor and advertising consent.

Existing Street Scene with Adertising

This impact assessment deals with the impact of proposed change across the site on the heritage value of 2-4 Kings Road and its wider historical context within the Conservation Area in both direct and indirect terms. Both adverse and beneficial impacts are assessed. The existing purple and pink advertising banner as well as the pink and purple hanging signs are to be removed as part of the application.

The impact assessment adopts ICOMOS assessment criteria to provide a logical assessment of the proposed changes to help inform and support the approval planning decision.

Area of Impact	Heritage Value	Level of Change	Overall Impact
Market Place/London Street Conservation Area	Aesthetic- Medium Historic-High Evidential- Medium Communal- High	No Change	Neutral Impact- There are minor changes proposed to the external elevations of the ground floor of 2-4 Kings Road. Signage will be kept to a minimal and lighting will be below the standard (300cd/m2) to be considerate of the conservation area.
2-4 Kings Road	Aesthetic-Neutral Historic- Negligible Evidential- Negligible Communal- Negligible	No Change	Neutral Impact- There are minor changes proposed to the external elevations of the ground floor of 2-4 Kings Road. Signage will be kept to a minimal and lighting will be below the standard (300cd/m2) to be considerate of the conservation area.

Conclusion

Through the process of impact-assessment, we have found that there are aspects of the proposal which would have no impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area due to there being no change to the external façade of the building. Internally the building is of little/no architectural merit so changes to the ground floor internally will be insignificant. There is an existing approval for signage and change of use and the installed is not drastically different to what has been approved.

In terms of Paragraph 202 of the NPPF, the works would be result in negligible harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area. In regards to Local Plan Policy the proposals would be in line with the following (see Appendix for further details):

- EN1- PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT
- EN3- ENHANCEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS
- EN6- DEVELOPMENT IN A HISTORIC CONTEXT
- CR2- DESIGN IN CENTRAL READING