



Heritage Statement

Acacia Road Enhancements, Reading

March 2026

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University of Reading

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1.2.3 The Site is located within Kendrick Road Conservation Area (**Figure 2**).

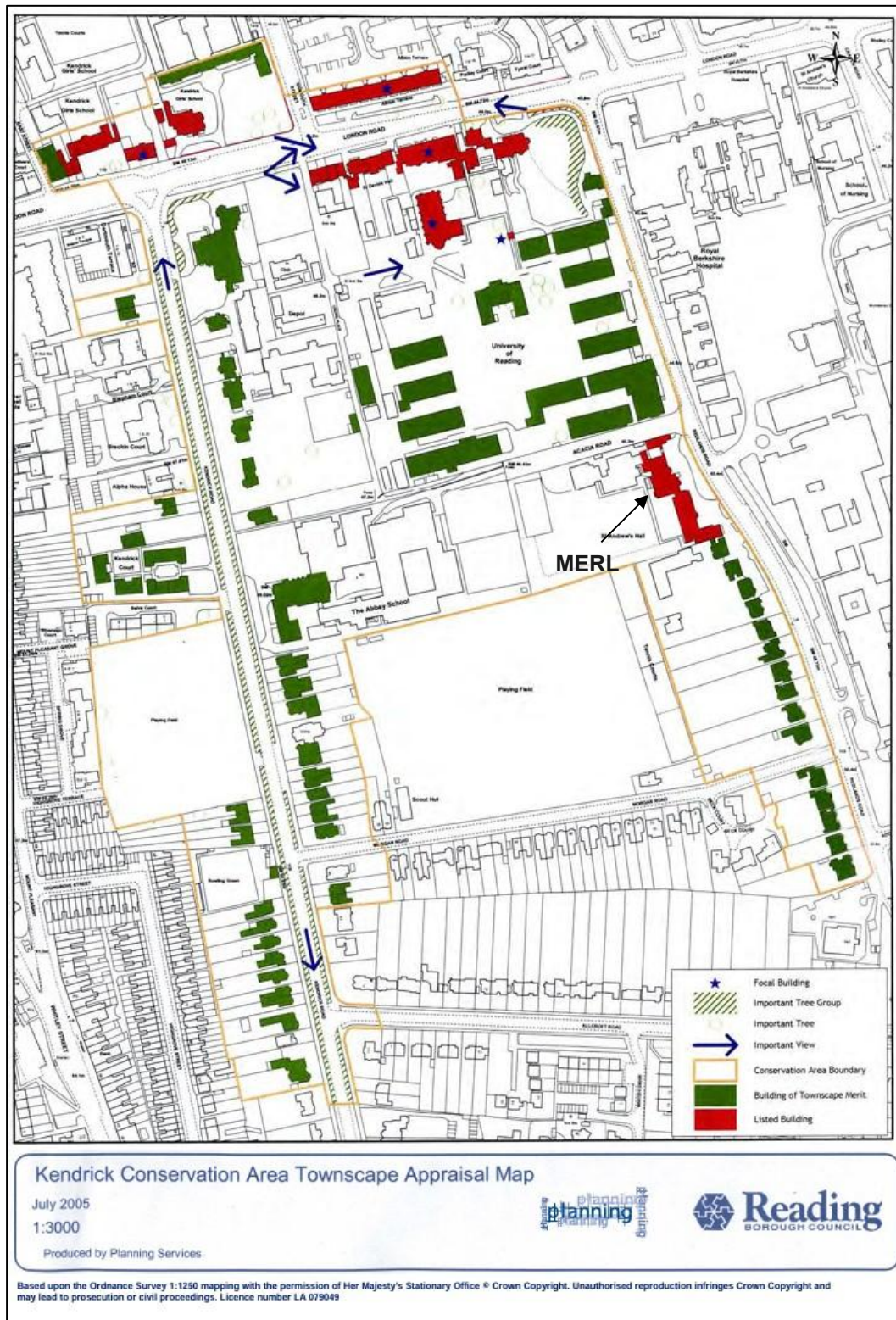


Figure 2. Kendrick Road Conservation Area and Listed Buildings © Reading Borough Council 2005

1.3 Methodology

Scope

1.3.1 This Statement will set out a brief history of the Site and its surroundings together with a statement of significance of those heritage assets potentially affected by the proposed entrance upgrade. Given the localised nature of the works, this Heritage Statement will focus specifically on the following heritage assets:

- Front Block of St Andrew's Hall and Stable Lodge to North (NHLE: 1321880), also known as the MERL;
- Kendrick Road Conservation Area.

1.3.2 This Statement focuses on built heritage assets. Given that the proposed works are localised, limited in extent, and confined to areas of previous disturbance, a separate archaeological assessment is not considered proportionate or necessary. Previous activity is likely to have caused disturbance and/or truncation of any archaeological deposits, and no designated archaeological assets are present within the Site boundary. Archaeology is therefore not considered a constraint to the applications. Should the Local Planning Authority (LPA) require further consideration, this could be addressed proportionately through a conditional programme of archaeological monitoring (watching brief) during construction, to be secured by a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) submitted to and approved by the LPA prior to the commencement of groundworks.

Guidance

1.3.3 This Statement has been prepared in accordance with the NPPF and guidance issued both by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) and Historic England, including Good Practice Advice (GPA) and Historic Environment Advice Notes (HEANs). These are listed in full in the References section of this Statement.

Data Sources

1.3.14 To determine the historic environment potential of the Site and its surroundings, a broad range of standard documentary and cartographic sources were examined to determine the likely nature, extent, preservation, and significance of any known heritage assets that may be present. **Table 1** below provides a summary of the key data sources consulted.

Table 1 Key Data Sources

Source	Data	Comment
Historic England	National Heritage List for England (NHLE) with information on statutorily designated heritage assets	Statutory designations (Scheduled Monuments; statutorily Listed Buildings; Registered Parks and Gardens; Historic Battlefields) can present a significant constraint to development.
Local Planning Authority	Conservation Area Appraisals	An area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance, designated by LPAs
	Locally Listed Buildings	Building of local importance designated by the local planning authority due to architectural and/or historic significance. Whilst not statutorily protected, inclusion on the list means that it is a material consideration in the planning process.
Online	Historic maps (e.g. tithe, enclosure, estate), published journals and local history	Baseline information on the historic environment.

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- 1.3.4 This Heritage Statement was compiled using secondary information derived from several sources. The assumption is made that this data as well as that derived from other secondary sources, is reasonably accurate.
- 1.3.5 Archival material relating to the Site and study area was not consulted in person at the Royal Berkshire Archives. An initial review of the online catalogue did not reveal any further relevant information, to what could be obtained online, that would inform our understanding of the Site and assessment of impact. Whilst there may be other material held in private collections, local repositories, and the National Archives, it was not possible to view these as part of the assessment, and this is not considered proportionate to the nature of the proposed development.

Site Visit

- 1.3.6 A site visit was undertaken on 11 March 2026 to inform the built historic environment assessment, and to collect the photographic record of the baseline undertaken in accordance with Historic England's Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice (2016).

Definitions

- 1.3.7 Annex 2: Glossary of the NPPF 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. It includes designated and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).”

- 1.3.8 Heritage significance is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF (2024) as:

“The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.”

- 1.3.9 The NPPF definition of significance further guides that in the planning context, heritage interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic, or historic. The definitions are provided in the updated Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).
- 1.3.10 In relation to designated heritage assets, the assessment considers the contribution that setting makes to the overall significance of the asset. The setting of a heritage asset is described in Annex 2 of the NPPF as:

“The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.”

- 1.3.11 Setting is the way in which the asset is understood and experienced. It is not an asset in itself and differs from curtilage (historic/present property boundary); context (association with other assets irrespective of distance) and historic character (sum of all historic attributes, including setting, associations, and visual aspects).

Assessment of Significance

- 1.3.12 The assessment of significance of the identified heritage assets follows the heritage interest-led approach set out in the NPPF, comprising archaeological, architectural, and historic interest. This has been guided by the definitions provided in the updated 'Planning Policy Guidance' (2014).



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- 1.3.13 The assessment of significance is also informed by Historic England's Good Practice Advice in Planning (GPA) 'Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision Taking in the Historic Environment' (2015) and 'Advice Note 12: Statements of Heritage Significance – Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets' (2019) which provide general advice on assessing significance to ensure heritage statements meet the requirements of the NPPF.
- 1.3.14 The heritage interest of an asset's physical presence is assessed in terms of attributes identified in statutory criteria, general principles for selection (DCMS 2013 and 2018), selection guides published by Historic England, and regional research agendas.
- 1.3.15 The contribution of a given site or application area to an asset's significance is assessed in order to provide a basis for assessing the sensitivity of the heritage asset to change within that specific area. Although non-designated heritage assets are not considered to be of sufficient interest to merit formal designation, they are still considered an important feature of the local built environment and thus requires consideration as part of the planning process..
- 1.3.16 The assessment of the contribution made by the setting of the heritage assets follows the staged assessment approach set out in Historic England's guidance document 'Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition): The Setting of Heritage Assets' (GPA3, 2017). These stages are:
- **Step 1:** Asset Identification. The NPPF requires an approach that is proportional to the significance of the asset, and for this reason only the settings of the most sensitive (i.e., designated) heritage assets are considered in this assessment. A scoping exercise filters out those assets which would be unaffected, typically where there are no views to/from the site.
 - **Step 2:** Assess the contribution of setting. This stage assesses how setting contributes to the overall significance of a designated asset.
 - **Step 3:** Assess Change. This considers the effect of the proposals on asset significance. It is noted however that it can be difficult to quantify such change to the overall significance of a designated heritage asset (for example, significance would rarely be downgraded from 'high' to 'medium' due to changes in setting). For this reason, the impact is reported in this assessment in terms of the extent to which the proposals would change how the asset is understood and experienced (in terms of no harm, less than substantial harm, substantial harm or total loss of significance).
 - **Step 4:** Mitigation. This explores the way to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm. This is typically considered at the design stage (i.e., embedded design mitigation).
 - **Step 5:** Reporting. Making and documenting decisions and outcomes. This reports the assessment of effects.

Assessment of Harm

- 1.3.17 Professional judgement is used to consider the impact of future development on the significance of identified heritage asset. When assessing harm, it is the degree of harm to the asset's significance that is to be assessed, rather than the scale of development. Harm can arise as a result of direct and indirect impacts to heritage assets, for example through physical alterations or through development within their setting.
- 1.3.18 Harm is assessed in NPPF terms as 'no harm,' 'less than substantial harm', 'substantial harm' or 'total loss of significance.'

Assumptions and Limitations

- 1.3.19 The following assumptions and limitations apply to this assessment:



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- The baseline assessment has been based on information readily available at the time of undertaking the assessment.
- The baseline assessment relies on the accuracy of secondary source data. There is always some degree of uncertainty in relation to these sources; and
- Access to private properties has not been obtained.

Legislation and Guidance Documentation

1.3.20 A summary of the legislative and policy framework is set out in **Appendix A**.

1.4 Authorship

- 1.4.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Emily Taylor, Senior Heritage Planner (BA(Hons), MA and ACIfA). The author is responsible for the analysis, evaluation, and conclusions presented in this document, drawing on professional experience, sector guidance, site-based research, and documentary evidence. This Statement has been produced in accordance with recognised industry standards, including the principles of professional ethics, objectivity, and competency required by IHBC and ClfA.



2 Historic Environment Baseline

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The following section provides a high-level summary of the historic development of the Site and surrounding landscape before assessing the significance of MERL (NHLE: 1321880) and Kendrick Road Conservation Area. The level of information provided is proportionate to the nature of the proposals and accords with the assessment methodology specified in the HEANs and GPAs produced by Historic England.
- 2.1.2 The NHLE entry for MERL discussed in Section 2.3 is provided in **Appendix B**. Photographs of the associated curtilage-listed wall are provided in **Appendix C**.

2.2 Historic Context

Reading

- 2.2.1 Settlement in Reading dates from the early medieval period, with place name evidence referring to the home of 'Reada's People' in the 8-9th century AD. By the medieval period it had grown into a town and Royal Borough situated beside the River Kennet and overlooking the floodplain of the River Thames to the north. Its position at this confluence influenced its role in trade and agriculture, and in 1121 King Henry I founded Reading Abbey which became a major centre for religion and learning. Despite the dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century, the town maintained its importance and during the English Civil War (1642-1651) held an important position between London and the west of England. The 19th century in this area is characterised by rapid industrialisation, and the arrival of the railways further supported its economic growth and expansion. The town is renowned for its production of bulbs, biscuits and beer from this period, associated with companies like Sutton Seeds, Simonds Brewery and Huntley and Palmer. Reading's gaol was built in the mid-19th century and its renowned for its association with Oscar Wilde. During the 20th century there was a decline in the earlier industries, but growth expanded in education and technology with the establishment of the University of Reading in 1926.
- 2.2.2 Redlands Road, situated immediately east of the Site, was known as Rudden Lane in the 16th century and subsequently Red Lane until the 1840s. St Andrew's Hall (MERL) was the only significant development on the west side of the road in the late 19th century. By the early to mid-20th century, the west side had been developed with residential housing. The eastern side formed part of the Royal Berkshire Hospital (1837-1839).

University of Reading

- 2.2.3 The University was originally founded as the University Extension College, Reading, an extension college of Christ Church, Oxford, in the late 19th century. It subsequently merged with the Schools of Science and Art to form Reading College, and the institution became University College Reading in 1902. The College expanded its range of subjects and the demand for space prompted a new campus on London Road, funded by benefactors such as the Palmer family and Lord and Lady Wantage. It became a university in 1926. Following World War II, the University purchased Whiteknights Park, a non-designated 18th century historic parkland, and this became the core focus of the institute.
- 2.2.4 Throughout its development the University has expanded its own specific collections, which in 1951 culminated in the development of MERL by John Higgs of the University's Agriculture Department who were responding to the vast changes in English farming and wanted to preserve and record such. MERL grew throughout the late 20th century and in 2006 came together with the University's Special Collections at St Andrew's Hall, with purpose-built galleries. The University's Art Collections joined them in 2016.



The Site

- 2.2.5 Cartographic sources from the mid-19th century record the Site as undeveloped agricultural land situated on the west side of Redlands Road. Redlands Road (labelled as Red Lane) is recorded following its existing route, and a road following the course of Acacia Road extends west to connect with New Road (**Figure 3**)

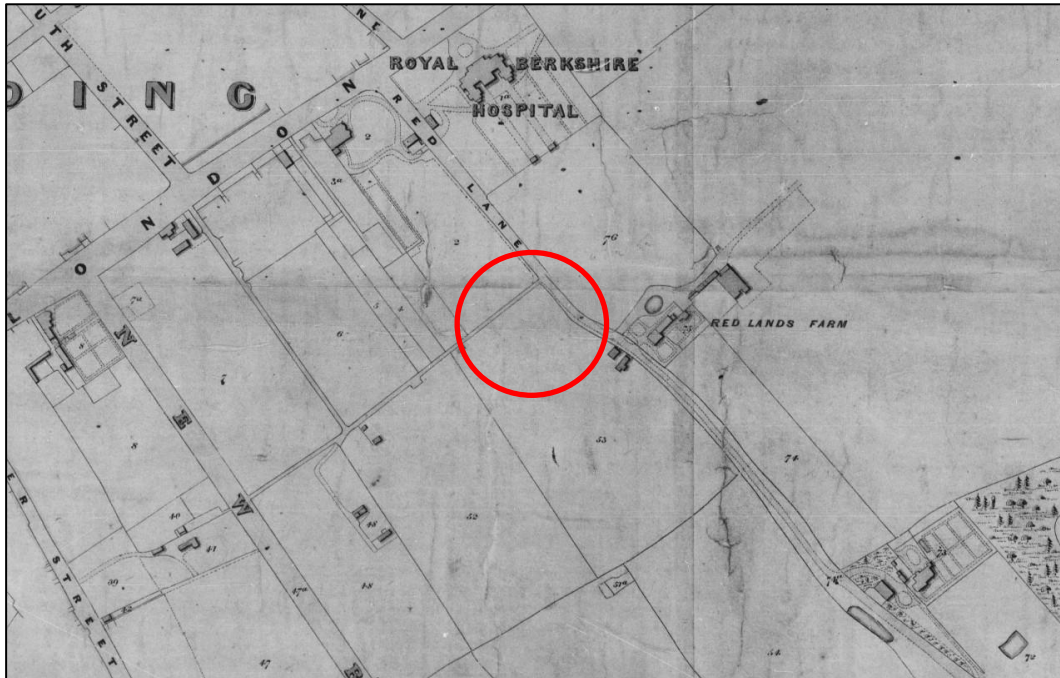


Figure 3. Extract from the Parish of St Giles, Reading Tithe Map 1840 (approximate Site location)¹

- 2.2.6 St Andrew's Hall which houses MERL is a Grade II Listed Building located on Redlands Road. It was originally designed by Sir Alfred Waterhouse in 1880 for local businessman Alfred Palmer of the Huntley and Palmer Biscuit company. Formerly known as East Thorpe, it is recorded on Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping from the late 19th century onwards (**Figure 4-5**). The principal building faced east, setback from the roadside behind a private driveway and planting. Its stable block and associated lodge are located to the north, and outbuildings are situated independently to the west, including a number of glass houses. Access was afforded off Redlands Road, with the principal access to the north (likely entrance) and secondary access (likely exit) to the south.
- 2.2.7 In response to capacity and quality standards, Palmer offered his residence to the UoR, and the terms of the lease included a new wing to increase the capacity. St Andrew's Hall was extended for student accommodation in 1911 and was transferred to the University following the death of Palmer in 1936. From 1911 onward the building was known as St Andrews Hall, one of the University's first halls of residence (**Figure 6-7**). It was initially occupied by female students, with capacity increasing throughout its use. Documentary sources record the presence of bathrooms, pantries, bedrooms, cloakrooms, drying rooms and bicycle sheds. To facilitate its use as a university residence, internal changes were undertaken in the early 20th century although many historic features survive today including fireplaces, windows, moulding and doorways.
- 2.2.8 Historic mapping and aerial imagery (available online) record its continued occupation and functional use throughout the 20th century, with access afforded off Redlands Road to the east. The grounds of the building encompassed within the Site boundary were characterised by planting, hardstanding and mature trees.

¹ © The Genealogist 2026

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- 2.2.9 Since the early 21st century MERL has been subject to development and extension, to house the museum collections. This activity is predominately focused west of the Listed Building, with the grounds within the Site remaining utilised for car parking, access and planting. Historic access arrangements have evolved over time, with the principal points of entry and exit having been altered (date unknown).

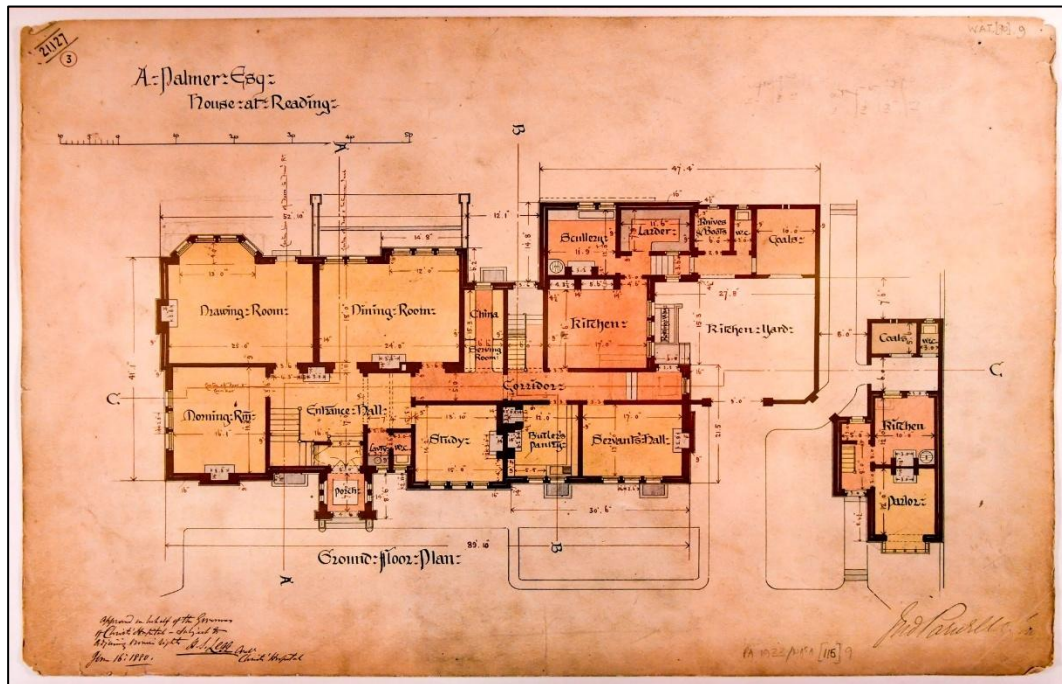


Figure 4. East Thorpe Ground Floor Plan 1880²

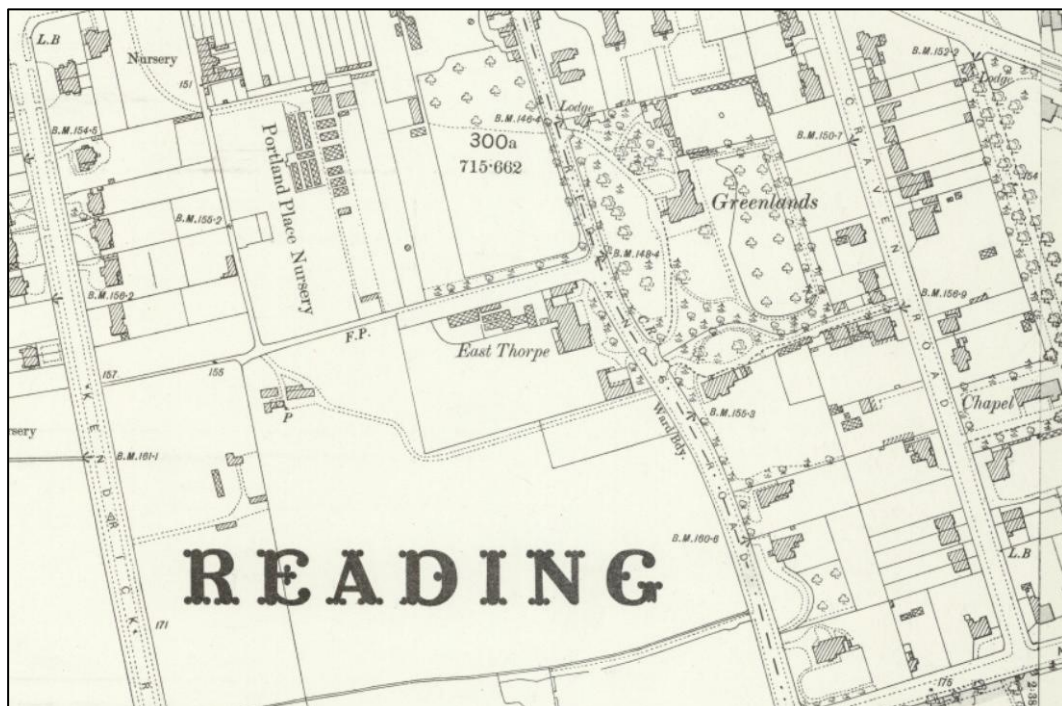


Figure 5. 1892-1914 25" OS Map³

² Reproduced from: <https://blogs.reading.ac.uk/tales-from-the-archives/2022/06/09/st-andrews-from-hostel-to-hall/>

³ © The Genealogist 2026

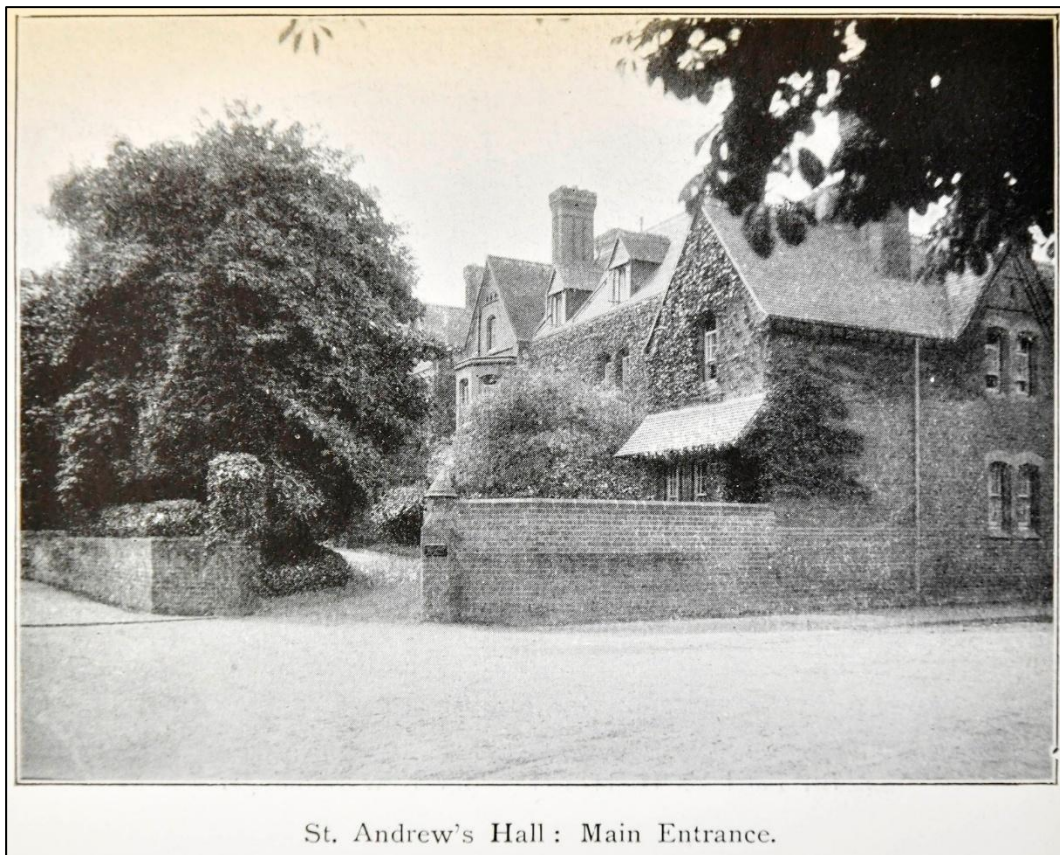


Figure 6. St Andrew's Hall 1913⁴



Figure 7. St Andrew's Hall 1915⁵

⁴ Reproduced from: <https://blogs.reading.ac.uk/tales-from-the-archives/2022/06/09/st-andrews-from-hostel-to-hall/>

⁵ Reproduced from: <https://merl.reading.ac.uk/news-and-views/join-our-big-rural-party-throughout-2026/>

2.3 Significance Assessment

MERL

- 2.3.1 MERL comprises a late 19th century two and three storey building constructed of red brick with a clay tiled roof orientated east to west (**Figure 8-10**). It is characterised by features including prominent chimneys, sash windows with terracotta window detailing and steep gables. The principal elevation faces east and incorporates an octagonal turret and single storey porch of Gothic architectural design. The former stable building and a two-storey lodge is located to the north of the principal building.



Figure 8. MERL Building

- 2.3.2 The building's heritage significance derives from its historic and architectural interest inherent in the evolution of the building, its fabric, form and fixtures, and association with both the University and prominent figures including Alfred Palmer and Alfred Waterhouse. The building is a good example of Victorian gothic architecture.
- 2.3.3 The setting of the building derives its curtilage, position on Redlands Road characterised by other Victorian buildings, location within the townscape of Reading and relationship / association with the University of Reading. The curtilage of the building comprises its position within its grounds, setback from Redlands Road to the east, enclosed by a stepped red brick boundary wall.

Boundary Wall

- 2.3.4 Research undertaken by Stantec as part of this report, indicates that MERL has been enclosed by a boundary wall along Redlands Road since its construction. While the building and its grounds have undergone alteration over time, historic mapping shows that the two existing entrances correspond with their historic locations. Despite alterations to the entrance / exits, the removal of gates, planting changes, car parking revisions (**Figure 9-10**) and localised repairs or alterations to the wall fabric, the eastern part of the grounds, including the internal drive arrangement, entrances and boundary, remains largely intact and continues to illustrate the historic context of the building.



Figure 9. View looking north across the MERL car park



Figure 10. View looking south across the MERL car park

2.3.5 The curtilage of a building (principal building) comprises any area of land and other buildings that are around associated with that building. When assessing if a structure is curtilage-listed, there are three factors considered:

- Physical layout of the principal building and structure;
- Ownership, both historically and at the date of listing; and
- The use or function both historically and at the date of listing (Historic England 2025).

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- 2.3.6 The boundary wall at MERL is considered to be curtilage-listed by virtue of its functional, historical and spatial relationship with MERL. It has a clear function, enclosing land historically and presently associated with it, and documentary evidence suggests the presence of such since the date of construction of the principal building. The wall served, and continues to serve, an ancillary function, defining the extent of the grounds in the east and formal access arrangements.
- 2.3.7 Presently, the boundary wall extends from the corner of the two-storey lodge along Acacia Road (**Figure 11**), before breaking at the junction with Redlands Road to provide vehicular access into the grounds. Historically, this section of the wall was of a reduced height, was extended in the early 20th century as demonstrated by **Figure 6-7**, and subsequently reduced to form the existing stepped appearance. The entrance / exist in this location (hereafter referred to as Acacia Road junction of MERL) is flanked by paired red brick piers of differing height, set symmetrically. They mark the formal entrance or driveway onto the estate and are built to a design reflective of status, complementing the architecture of the main building. They are constructed on a square brick shaft rising from a stone plinth and comprise square brick pillars of red brick with chamfered corners, laid in regular English bond horizontal courses with sharp well-defined edges, and stone cap. The western pier features a projecting decorative terracotta pyramidal cap with finial which complements the terracotta window decoration on the main building. The pier incorporates a decorative circular rosette roundel to the face and an iron chain fixing to the base, creating a chain barrier across the entrance. The eastern pier has been truncated and does not extend beyond the stone cap. A small plaque, text indistinguishable, is present on the northeast elevation. It also includes iron hinge plates, likely associated with a former gate, which has been removed.
- 2.3.8 A review of historic material (**Figure 6-7**) and the current fabric demonstrates that the entrance has been altered historically, with historic photographs recording a taller brick pier with brick and terracotta finial. No stone cap is present. They also demonstrate the overall height of the wall to Acacia Road and Redlands Road has altered historically to create the extent stepping appearance.



Figure 11. View towards the MERL from the northeast

- 2.3.9 The wall continues along Redlands Road from the eastern pier (**Figure 12**) at a reduced height before stepping up. The lower section of wall is characterised rowlock (brick on edge) header course. When this steps up, this appears to be a double cant sandstone coping. The

wall is characterised by a running English brick bond and double-cant red brick capping. Along the course of the wall there is clear evidence of repair and rebuild, with sandstone coping tile.

2.3.10 The stepped height of the wall follows the increasing topography of the road and, a secondary opening (hereafter referred to as the southern entrance / exist), is demarcated by two brick piers set adjacent to, but independently of the wall indicating they have been altered historically. The piers are of similar design to those to the north, comprising square red brick pillars with chamfered corners, although these stand slightly apart from the wall. The brick piers measure c. 6.45m in height, with the entrance c. 4.45m in width. These paired pillars do not comprise finials, they feature flat tops formed of tapered corniced decorative brick courses after the stone cap and the northern pier comprises a small plaque, inscribed 'East Thorpe', present on the east elevation. The piers include iron hinge plates and bolt holes reflecting where former hardware (i.e. gates) would have been fixed.

2.3.11 A third former entrance / exist is present at the very southern extent of the red brick wall along Redlands Road, beyond the return on the southeastern corner of the building plot, defining the grounds associated with MERL from the adjacent building (no. 8). The width of the former opening, infilled with red brick, indicates it was for pedestrian access, and the design of the brick piers correlates with those to the north.



Figure 12. View towards the MERL from the southeast

2.3.12 Although the wall demonstrates evidence of alteration and repair, it forms a clearly defined edge between the public realm and MERL grounds. Constructed in brick consistent with the surrounding late 19th buildings, the wall reflects the historic material palette of the area and contributes positively to the character of the streetscape. Its interest derives from the following three elements:

- Group value – contributing to the setting of MERL, both historic and extent, enclosing those grounds principally associated with it;
- Historic interest – although subject to repair and alteration, the wall is likely to have originated when MERL was constructed in the late 19th century;
- Architectural interest – representative of Victorian boundary treatments and gateway designs, consistent with the status of MERL when constructed; and

- Visual interest – demarcating historic plot boundaries along Redlands Road and through materials complementing the main building. It is appreciable in the context of, and contributes to the legibility and experience of MERL, in views from Redlands Road.

2.3.13 The boundary wall continues along Acacia Road, although the historic element has been replaced with a modern rebuild. The only surviving evidence of the former boundary treatment is situated opposite Crown Place (**Figure 13**), although this has also been subject to alteration and rebuild. In its current form it is isolated and cannot be appreciated in the wider context of that surviving in the east. Whilst it continues to form part of the setting, its overall interest and contribution is considered more limited than that surviving along Redlands Road.



Figure 13. View of red brick boundary wall along Acacia Road

Kendrick Road Conservation Area

2.3.14 The Site is located within part of Kendrick Road Conservation Area which encompasses London Road, Kendrick Road and Redlands Road. The area is of historic, architectural and aesthetic interest and derives social value from its association with the University and hospital. In sum, these interests derive from the following:

- Historic development and evolution which remains legible in the road network, built fabric and University campus;
- Historical association with prominent figures in Reading's heritage, including Huntley and Palmer biscuit factory and the author Mary Russell Mitford;
- Alignment of the road network with landmark building and focal points, for example Kendrick Road is aligned with the spire of Christ Church;
- Historic buildings predominately of 18th to 20th century date, both designated (12 Grade II and two Grade II*) and non-designated, which reflect different architectural periods including both the Victorian and Edwardian periods;
- Vegetation and open space, including avenue planting along the road network, playing fields and at the landscaped grounds at the University;

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- Variation in activity, noise and light levels arising from traffic and pedestrian movement between streets; and
 - Red brick boundary walls and historic railings.
- 2.3.15 Within the Conservation Area four-character areas have been identified; the Site lies within Area 3: Redlands Road. MERL is identified as a 'notable building' which contributes to this area through its historic and architectural interests and the physical fabric which forms an 'interesting frontage to Redlands Road' (p. 16).
- 2.3.16 As noted above, boundary walls are identified as a key characteristic of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. In the context of the site, the red brick boundary walls along Redland Road which enclose both MERL and continue northward beyond the junction with Acacia Road and The Dairy are considered to be a positive feature within the streetscene that contribute to the significance of the asset.
- 2.3.17 The boundary walls form an integral part of the historic environment, best appreciated at close proximity although glimpsed in wider long-distance views from the north, as they provide a clear distinction between public and private space and reinforcing the historic grain and enclosure of the street. Constructed from materials that reflect the prevailing local palette, the boundary walls complement the architectural character of surrounding buildings and contribute to a coherent streetscape. Their scale, alignment and continuity help define views along the street and sustain the sense of historic enclosure typical of traditional urban environments.



3 Impact Assessment and Conclusions

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 In examining the potential impact of the proposed applications, this section considers the degree to which these may alter the way in which the Site contributes, or otherwise, to the significance of MERL and the Kendrick Road Conservation Area. It then draws conclusions on the extent of any resulting harm or benefit, in NPPF terms.

3.1.2 It also considers the overall applications in relation to national and local planning policy, the latter of which comprises Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) with the following policies relevant to this assessment: Policy EN1 which relates to the protection of the historic environment and EN3 for enhancement of Conservation Areas. All policy is listed in full in **Appendix A**.

3.2 Description of Proposals

3.2.1 The application for planning permission and LBC is for an entrance upgrade on Acacia Road. This comprises:

- Restriction of vehicular access to / from Acacia Road junction of MERL through implementation of removable bollards;
- Widening of the existing southern entrance / exit onto Redlands Road from MERL to formalise it as the primary vehicle route into the grounds;
- Reconfiguration of parking and landscaping in the MERL grounds to include pedestrianised areas, an additional accessible bay, new planting, parking for MERL vehicles and new waste storage enclosure;
- Enhancements to the Acacia Road junction including a new crossing, increased width of pavements and a reduced carriageway;
- Enhancements to the Acacia Road delivery zone comprising a new loading bay, new pedestrian route, relocation of existing wall mounted electric vehicle (EV) charging points, and an enhanced entrance to the Dairy; and
- New gates, to match existing, installed on the rear MERL entrance / exist off Acacia Road.

3.2.2 The proposed widening of the existing southern entrance / exist onto Redlands Road from MERL comprises:

- Removal of 2m of existing wall;
- Relocation of end coping stone and making good of brick wall end;
- Reconstruction of wall end and brick pier using salvaged brick and mortar to match the existing. Reconstruction will be undertaken on a like-for-like basis with all bonding as existing; and
- Extension of cobbled threshold to accord with the entrance area. The existing cobbled threshold will be retained, although some setts will need relaying to new levels for H&S⁶, and material will be reclaimed or match existing. To ensure the original size of the entrance remains legible and appreciable, detailing will be included in the design. A subtle

⁶ Should these deteriorate on relaying, they will be replaced with material matching the existing.



variation in colour will also maintain the legibility of the original entrance, although this difference will reduce gradually as weathering occurs.

- 3.2.3 The above is illustrated in the accompanying drawings pack produced for application submission. The drawings should be reviewed in conjunction with this report.

3.3 Impact Assessment

Direct Impacts

MERL

- 3.3.1 The proposed applications would result in no direct impact on the principal building, MERL. Appropriate advice has been sought to avoid impact throughout the design process. This ensures that any indirect effects during construction, including those associated with vibration, have been appropriately considered and addressed and, where relevant, mitigation measures will be implemented. Mitigation measures will be secured through the Construction Management Plan, which will include heritage-specific provisions such as buffer protection zones to safeguard the Listed Building during the construction phase.
- 3.3.2 The proposed gates will be fixed to modern fabric, an extension constructed to house the museum collections, positioned to the rear of the principal building and will therefore result in no direct impact on historic fabric.

Curtilage Listed Boundary Wall

- 3.3.3 The proposed applications would result in a minimal direct impact to the curtilage-listed wall. The proposed removal of a limited section of the curtilage-listed boundary wall has been carefully assessed in terms of its impact on the heritage significance of MERL. While the wall forms part of the curtilage and contributes to the setting and historic character of the Listed Building, the proposals relate to sections of the wall and associated entrances that have been subject to historic alteration. In particular, the entrance / exits proposed for modification represent the most altered elements, with a notable loss of historic fabric. As such, the extant boundary treatment does not constitute a wholly original or unaltered boundary treatment, but instead comprises fabric from several phases of development. Furthermore, the works are confined to a small, clearly defined section and are limited to what is necessary to facilitate the proposed access arrangements.
- 3.3.4 The alterations would be localised in extent and would not materially affect the overall form, legibility, or historic relationship between the wall and the building. The wall would continue to contribute positively to the setting, with historic access arrangements retained. The works include making good the wall through the rebuilding and reinstatement of the brick pier on a like-for-like basis, ensuring that the historic opening remains legible, appreciable, and clearly understood as part of the site's historic evolution. As such, the proposal would not harm the architectural or historic significance of the curtilage listed wall. The remaining wall and associated boundary features would continue to convey the historic character and enclosure of the Site, ensuring that the overall significance and appreciation are preserved.
- 3.3.5 The changes to existing southern entrance / exist onto Redlands Road from MERL accord with conservation approaches to managing change to historic fabric and enable the required alterations whilst preserving the overall appearance, form and function of the wall and southern opening. By salvaging material and matching construction techniques and materials, the rebuilding of the pier, making good of the wall and surface treatment work ensures continuity, maintains legibility and authenticity, and ensures long-term preservation appropriately.
- 3.3.6 Although vehicular access to and from the Acacia Road junction of MERL would be restricted through the installation of bollards, the opening would be retained and the bollards removable, allowing access to be reinstated if required. There would be no direct impact on the fabric of

the boundary wall, and the legibility of the opening would remain appreciable. Its contribution to the setting of MERL, and to the understanding of historic and current access arrangements to the grounds from Redlands Road, would therefore be preserved.

Indirect Impacts

- 3.3.7 Indirect impacts on MERL and its curtilage-listed boundary wall and collectively considered below.
- 3.3.8 Whilst the proposals would alter the circulation pattern off Acacia Road and Redlands Road, both access points would remain legible. The change in experiential approach is considered to have a minimal impact on the heritage significance of MERL and its curtilage-listed wall, as the heritage interests and overall spatial hierarchy of the accesses will be preserved.
- 3.3.9 The proposals would not alter the experience via the rear access point off Acacia Road and would be in keeping with the function and character of the area. There would be no change posed to the gardens situated west of MERL.
- 3.3.10 Any changes proposed within the MERL car park would be in keeping with the existing character, function and use of this area and would not result in a material change that harms the appreciation, legibility or significance of the Listed Building or its curtilage-listed wall. Furthermore, the proposed surface changes for the pedestrian areas would be in keeping with the existing context and materials present. They would not represent a visual change or negatively impact upon legibility, experience or appreciation. To minimise the amount of street furniture, existing will be used for new signage and convex mirror.
- 3.3.11 Landscaping proposals internally within the grounds of MERL provide an opportunity to improve the visual appearance and access arrangements, with additional planting to support the existing. The presence of planting softens the perceived appearance of the hardstanding and is in keeping with the historic character of this area.
- 3.3.12 External changes would likewise respect the character of the surrounding road network and would improve access, supporting the continued use, maintenance and long-term preservation of MERL. The material palette draws upon the existing character of the Conservation Area, to create unity and cohesion, and would not appear out of context.

Conclusions

- 3.3.13 To conclude, the works would result in:
- Less than substantial harm to the curtilage-listed boundary wall, through direct impacts to the wall associated with the existing southern entrance / exit onto Redlands Road;
 - No harm to MERL as there are no direct or indirect impacts would impact upon the significance. Whilst there is a change posed to the wall itself, the legibility, experience and appreciation of the principal building, and its setting including relationship and association with the boundary wall, would be preserved.

Kendrick Road Conservation Area

- 3.3.14 Whilst the proposals present a change to a feature which positively contributes to Kendrick Road Conservation Area, the overall contribution the boundary (and its existing surface treatments) makes will be preserved. It will continue to form part of the historic environment, contributing to the setting of MERL and visual quality of the streetscape of Redlands Road. Once the work is completed, the proposed changes to the existing entrances into MERL would appear as part of the existing fabric and context. The intervention, in visual terms, would not be readily legible and thus not detract from the appreciation, experience or understanding of the historic environment.

- 3.3.15 The remainder of the work proposed comprises a localised alteration in the existing road corridor of Redlands Road and Acacia Road. The proposed surface treatments would be in keeping with the existing context and prevailing materials, and would give rise to no meaningful impact. Relocation of the wall mounted EV chargers will be fixed to modern fabric along Acacia Road. These interventions are limited in extent and would not alter the overall character or function of the road corridor(s), or their alignment, and these streetscapes would continue to be read as part of the Conservation Area's environment. Once the works are complete, they would result in a negligible level of change when experienced in their context, whilst improving access addressing existing constraints without impacting negatively on the historic environment.

3.4 Conclusions

- 3.4.1 Change, including development, can sustain, enhance, or better reveal the significance of an asset as well as detract from it or leave it unaltered. The design of a development affecting the setting of a heritage asset may play an important part in determining its impact. The contribution of the setting to the historic significance of an asset can be sustained or enhanced if new built form buildings are carefully designed to respect their setting by their scale, proportion, height, massing, alignment, and use of materials.
- 3.4.2 The assessment has concluded that the proposals would result in a limited impact on the curtilage-listed boundary wall associated with MERL. The proposed loss of a small amount of historic fabric from this curtilage-listed structure would give rise to a level of less than substantial harm. However, having regard to the limited and localised nature of the works, the high degree of historic alteration already evident along the wall (including entrance / exists), and the fact that the proposals relate solely to the boundary treatment, rather than the principal building, this harm is considered to be at the very lowest end of the scale, approaching no harm. As a degree of less than substantial harm has been identified, paragraph 215 of the NPPF is engaged. This is further reflected in LPA policy EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment which states that any harm should require clear and convincing justification, in the form of public benefits, and be justified through a Heritage Statement. This has been delivered within this report, and the public benefits are set out in full in the accompanying Planning Statement. The harm identified needs to be weighed against improved access arrangements to a publicly accessible heritage asset, which would support its ongoing use, management and long-term conservation.
- 3.4.3 Whilst harm has been identified through loss of historic fabric to the curtilage-listed boundary wall surrounding MERL, such harm is limited as the works would be localised, carefully managed and undertaken on a like-for-like basis, ensuring that historic fabric, legibility and setting of MERL are preserved. The proposals respect the historic character and function of the site of MERL, retain historic access arrangements, and support the continued use, management and long-term preservation of MERL.
- 3.4.4 Notwithstanding the proposed alterations to a limited section of the curtilage-listed boundary wall, the significance of the Grade II Listed MERL would be preserved. The works do not affect the principal Listed Building directly and would not alter its architectural or historic interest. While the boundary wall forms part of the setting of MERL, it makes a limited contribution to the overall significance of the Listed Building when considered as a whole. The proposed changes are localised, relate to areas that have already undergone historic alteration, and would retain the legibility of historic access arrangements. As such, the proposals would result in no harm to the significance of MERL, and its setting would continue to be experienced and understood in a manner consistent with its historic development and significance.
- 3.4.5 Regarding Kendrick Road Conservation Area, this assessment has concluded no harm, as the overall contribution MERL makes to the historic environment will be retained and the proposed changes to Redlands Road and Acacia Road will not make a material change to the historic environment.

Policy Compliance

- 3.4.6 Regarding MERL and Kendrick Conservation Area, the proposals meet the statutory and policy tests set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as significance of these Listed Building and character and appearance of the Conservation Area is preserved for current and future generations. The proposals also accord with Chapter 16 of the NPPF, particularly:
- Paragraph 208 as conflict between conservation of the heritage assets and the works has been avoided; and
 - Paragraph 210 as the significance and the positive contribution they make is sustained.
- 3.4.7 For the same reasons, the proposals are in accordance with LPA policy EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment. The proposals protect the significance of the Listed Building and Conservation Area and the historic character and local distinctiveness of the focus area. Harm has been avoided through carefully designed applications, and the significance of these heritage assets is preserved. Furthermore, the proposals comply with LPA policy EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas as through the application proposals the works:
- Reduce visual clutter through use of existing street furniture and limit that proposed to the absolute minimum and necessary;
 - Encourage the maintenance of and introduce sympathetic landscaping, planting and green space in the grounds of MERL; and
 - Improve signage and street furniture around the junction of Acacia Road.



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Appendix A Legislative and Planning Framework

A.1 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

- A.1.1 Works affecting Listed Buildings or structures, and Conservation Areas are subject to additional planning controls administered by LPAs under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. In considering development which affects a Listed Building or its setting, the LPA shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses (Section 66). In considering Conservation Areas the planning authority has a general duty to give special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area (Section 72).
- A.1.2 The statutory criteria for listing are the special architectural or historic interest of a building. Buildings on the list are graded to reflect their relative architectural and historic interest (DCMS, 2010a, para 7, page 4):
- Grade I: Buildings of exceptional interest;
 - Grade II*: Particularly important buildings of more than special interest;
 - Grade II: Buildings of special interest which warrant every effort being made to preserve them.

A.2 National Planning Policy Framework

- A.2.1 Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's current planning policy in relation to conserving and enhancing the historic environment. The key requirements are summarised below.
- A.2.2 Applicants are required to provide proportionate information on the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets affected by the proposals and an impact assessment of the proposed development on that significance. This should be in the form of a desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation (NPPF, 207).
- A.2.3 LPAs are required to take into account the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring; the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place (NPPF, 203/210).
- A.2.4 In determining planning applications, great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets - World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Protected Wreck Sites, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields or Conservation Areas designated under the relevant legislation (NPPF, 212/213).
- A.2.5 Paragraphs 214 and 215 set out two decision-making tests where proposals would lead to substantial and less than substantial harm, respectively. Paragraph 208 guides that where a development proposal would lead to less than substantial harm, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.
- A.2.6 In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset (NPPF, 216).
- A.2.7 LPAs should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their significance



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and the impact, and to make this evidence publicly accessible and any archives deposited with a local museum or other public depository (NPPF, 218).

- A.2.8 Paragraph 219 guides local planning authorities to look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.
- A.2.9 Implementation of the NPPF is supported by the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (2014 with updates (2019)).

A.3 Local Planning Policy

- A.3.1 The Site lies within the unitary authority of Reading Borough Council. The Reading Borough Local Plan was adopted in November 2019 and relevant policies to this Heritage Statement comprise the following

EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

Historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. This will include:

- Listed Buildings;
- Conservation Areas;
- Scheduled Monuments;
- Historic parks and gardens; and
- Other features with local or national significance, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and assets on the Local List.

All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits.

Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings.

Applications which affect Historic Parks and Gardens will safeguard features which form an integral part of the special character or appearance of the park or garden. Development will not detract from the enjoyment, layout, design, character, appearance, features or setting of the park or garden, key views out from the park, or prejudice its future restoration.

Applications which affect, or have the potential to affect, the significant features of heritage assets should be justified by a Heritage Statement.

The Council will monitor buildings and other heritage assets at risk through neglect, decay or other threats, proactively seeking solutions for assets at risk including consideration of appropriate development schemes that will ensure the repair and maintenance of the asset, and, as a last resort, using its statutory powers.

Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect or of damage to a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas

The special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced. Development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Positive consideration will be given to



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proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas. These may include:

- Reducing visual clutter caused by negative factors, such as poles and overhead wires, satellite dishes or unnecessary street furniture;
- Restoring original building features;
- Removing inappropriate additions or alterations to buildings;
- Protecting and encouraging the maintenance of green spaces and important trees, particularly where they are intrinsic to the history and character of the area;
- Improving signage and street furniture;
- Restoring or re-establishing appropriate paving, railings or walls;
- Sympathetic landscaping and planting;
- Improving or restoring green spaces, including front gardens, that are appropriate to the historic interest of a Conservation Area;
- Signage that reveals and promotes the Conservation Area and its boundaries;
- Interpretation panels to inform the public of the area's historical significance

Where a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan has been adopted for a particular Conservation Area, this will be a material consideration in determining applications for development.

EN4: Locally Important Heritage Assets

Development proposals that affect locally important heritage assets will demonstrate that development conserves architectural, archaeological or historical significance which may include the appearance, character and setting of the asset. Planning permission may be granted in cases where a proposal could result in harm to or loss of a locally important heritage asset only where it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the development significantly outweigh the asset's significance. Where it is accepted by the Local Planning Authority that retention is not important, recording of the heritage asset should be undertaken and submitted alongside development proposals. Replacement buildings should draw upon heritage elements of the previous design, incorporating historical qualities that made the previous building significant. This may include appearance, scale and architectural quality.

A.3.2 Kendrick Road Conservation Area Appraisal (2005) was also utilised for this Statement.

A.3.3 It is understood that the LPA is currently updating the Local Plan to set out planning policy to guide development up to 2041. The Local Plan Partial Update and Proposal Maps were submitted to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on 9 May 2025. The extant policy relating to the historic environment relevant to this assessment appears to be retained within the partial update.



Appendix B Listing Entry

B.1 Official list entry

- B.1.1 Heritage Category: Listed Building
- B.1.2 Grade: II
- B.1.3 List Entry Number: 1321880
- B.1.4 Date first listed: 14-Dec-1978
- B.1.5 Date of most recent amendment: 16-May-1979
- B.1.6 List Entry Name: Front Block of St Andrew's Hall and Stable Lodge to North
- B.1.7 Statutory Address 1: FRONT BLOCK OF ST ANDREW'S HALL AND STABLE LODGE TO NORTH, REDLANDS ROAD

B.2 Location

- B.2.1 Statutory Address: FRONT BLOCK OF ST ANDREW'S HALL AND STABLE LODGE TO NORTH, REDLANDS ROAD
- B.2.2 District: Reading (Unitary Authority)
- B.2.3 Parish: Non Civil Parish
- B.2.4 National Grid Reference: SU 72382 72733

B.3 Details

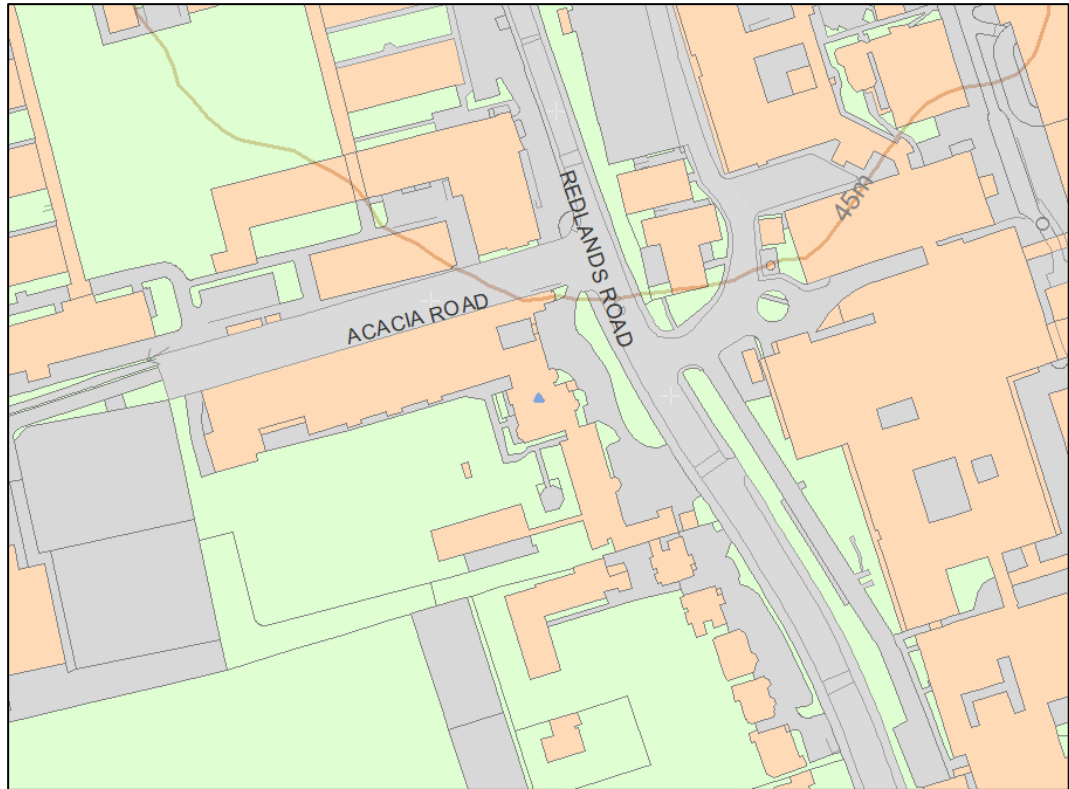
- B.3.1 In the entry for REDLANDS ROAD (west side) 9/162A St. Andrew's Hall the address shall be amended to read Front block of St. Andrew's Hall and stable lodge to north
- B.3.2 REDLANDS ROAD 1. 5128 (West Side) St Andrew's Hall SU 7272 9/162A II 2. Formerly East Thorpe. 1880. Designed by Alfred Waterhouse as a house for Alfred Palmer. 2 and 3 storeys red brick with gables. Tiled roof. Careful detailing. Terracotta window details. Sash windows with segmental heads. Entrance front has single storey porch of Gothic inspiration. 2 gables and a mullion and transom window behind. To right is a gable and a 2 storey canted bay window. To left is a 3 storeyed block with octagonal turret. Stable court with 2 storey lodge attached. Interior altered but retains spacious stair hall to north with original fireplace and dado and 1st floor landing, doors retain Waterhouse furniture and 3 windows and 1 door have Waterhouse grisaille glass. Entrance lobby to north also retain Waterhouse details and glass.
- B.3.3 Listing NGR: SU7238272733

B.4 Legacy

- B.4.1 Legacy System number: 39136
- B.4.2 Legacy System: LBS



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Appendix C Level 1 Historic Building Recording



Figure 14. View of existing southern entrance / exit onto Redlands Road from MERL looking west



Figure 15. View of extant existing southern entrance / exit onto Redlands Road from MERL brick piers



Figure 16. View of existing southern entrance / exit onto Redlands Road from MERL looking east



Figure 17. Sample view of stone cap on south pier of the existing southern entrance / exit onto Redlands Road from MERL



Figure 18. View of existing southern entrance / exit onto Redlands Road from MERL brick pier looking south



Figure 19. View of existing southern entrance / exit onto Redlands Road from MERL brick pier looking east



Figure 20. View of existing southern entrance / exit onto Redlands Road from MERL brick pier looking northeast



Figure 21. Sample view of inscription 'East Thorpe' on existing southern entrance / exit onto Redlands Road from MERL northern brick pier (east elevation)



Figure 22. Sample view of brick pier cap



Figure 23. Extant sign on brick wall



Figure 24. View of red brick wall looking northwest



Figure 25. Sample view of red brick wall buttress



Figure 26. Sample view encompassing MERL and its stepped height boundary wall in conjunction from Redlands Road



Figure 27. View looking south demonstrating the curving alignment of the red brick wall



Figure 28. View of vehicular access to / from Acacia Road junction of MERL looking southwest



Figure 29. View of the vehicular access to / from Acacia Road junction of MERL east brick pier



Figure 30. View of the vehicular access to / from Acacia Road junction of MERL east brick pier looking southeast



Figure 31. View of the vehicular access to / from Acacia Road junction of MERL looking northwest



Figure 32. View of the vehicular access to / from Acacia Road junction of MERL looking northwest



Figure 33. View of the red brick wall along Acacia Road



Figure 34. Sample view of sandstone coping

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