



Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee
23 April 2026

Dear Anthony Scholes

COMMENTS ON PLANNING APPLICATION PL/26/0237 - 2 BEDFORD ROAD

Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee object to application PL/26/0237, 2 Bedford Road, the former Battle Inn.

This proposal replicates a previous application PL/18/0876 which was allowed on appeal 25 June 2019. The appeal was brought for failure to notify a decision within the prescribed period. Reading Borough Council's Planning Application Committee (PAC) considered the application, which was recommended for refusal by officers, on 29 May 2019. The reasons for refusal in addition to affordable housing provision which was resolved in advance of the appeal were: 'The proposal by way of its bulk and in particular its four storey massing directly on the Bedford Road frontage together with its block like form and roof design is considered to be a significant overdevelopment of the site which would appear as a visually dominant and incongruous addition to the Bedford Road and Oxford Road street-scene. The proposal would fail to adequately address the corner location of the site as it turns to Bedford Road and its forward siting and massing is considered to be harmful to and to fails to preserve the setting of the adjacent Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area. It is considered the proposal would be contrary to policies CS7, CS33 and RC5.'

1. SUMMARY

- We agree with the 2019 officer recommendation and PAC refusal, for the reasons given, of the previous proposal PL/18/0876.
- It is eight years since the previous application was first submitted to Reading Borough Council. The wording of Heritage Statement does not appear to have been updated since then.
- Although PL/18/0876 was allowed on appeal it is clear from the Inspector's report Para 12 that there was an expectation that further enhancements to the design would be

made using an additional planning condition. This issue was highlighted by officers in a report on the appeal to PAC on 4 September 2019.

- Since the appeal was decided there have been changes to the NPPF, Reading's Local Plan was adopted in 2019 and a revised Russell Street/Castle Hill/ Oxford Road Conservation Area (CA) Appraisal was adopted in 2020.

1. HERITAGE

1.1 2 The Russell Street/Castle Hill/ Oxford Road CA was extended in 2020 to include most of the north side of Oxford Road between Alfred Street and the former Central Swimming Pool site. The former Battle Inn and 118a Oxford Road (Richer Sounds) were not included in the extended boundary but are now adjacent to properties within the CA to the west and east as well as to the south (Fig 1 below).

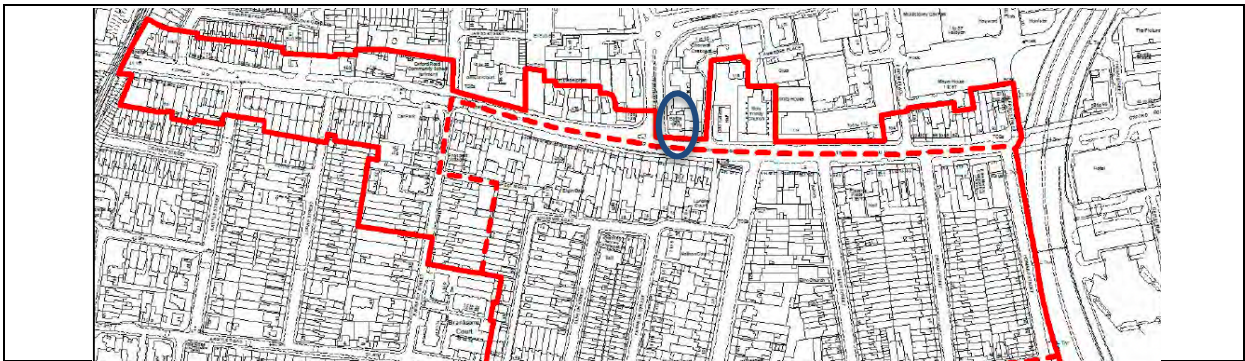


Figure 1 Russell Street/Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area 202 extension are to the north. Dotted line shows the pre-2020 boundary. Battle Inn is circled.

1.2 The Heritage Statement, formerly included within the Planning & Heritage Statement should be updated to assess the impact of the proposal on the proximity to the CA on three sides of the building which means that it has a greater negative impact on the CA than in 2019. It fails to comply with policies EN3, Enhancement of Conservation Areas or EN6 New Development in a Historic Context.

1.3 The Design & Access Statement says in para 2.3, Heritage Context, 'The Planning Inspector previously concluded that the proposal would preserve the setting of nearby listed buildings and would not harm the character or appearance of the conservation area. As the scheme is unchanged, those conclusions remain valid.' As set out above, the scheme may be unchanged but the CA boundary has changed and this should now be taken into account.

2. DESIGN

2.1 We do not agree with the statement in para 3.1 of the Design & Access Statement that, 'The siting, scale and appearance of the building were explicitly found to be acceptable by the Planning Inspector'. It is clear from the Inspector's report Para 12 that there was an expectation that improvements to the design were anticipated where it is stated, '... I consider that the design approach adopted to be appropriate but that the suggested planning condition would enable a further enhancement to the appearance of the building'. The additional condition is also included in Para 27 of the conclusion.

2.2 Should this application be granted an agreement on materials to be used should be secured by condition.

3. OTHER MATTERS

3.1 Historic references to the NPPF, Local Plan and NPPF should be brought up to date for this application.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 This application should be rejected for the reasons stated above

Your sincerely

Evelyn Williams

Chair Reading CAAC

On behalf of Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee

43 Milman Road

Reading

RG2 0AZ