



HERITAGE & TOWNSCAPE STATEMENT

138-144 *Friar Street,*
Reading *RG1 1EX*

AUGUST 2026

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Section 1

Introduction.

1 Introduction

- 1.1

This Heritage and Townscape Assessment (HTS) has been carried out on behalf of National Pub Portfolio Limited ("the Applicant") as part of a revised planning application to Reading Borough Council for 138-144 Friars Streets, Reading RG1 1EX (henceforth 'the Site').
- 1.2

The Site benefits from a previous permission [Ref: PL/22/1235] for:

"Demolition of No's 138-141 & 142-143 Friar St, partial demolition of No. 144 Friar St and erection of ground, mezzanine and 1st to 6th floor (7 storey) hotel building with 163 bedspaces (Class C1), with ancillary ground floor lounge, bar and restaurant and associated works".
- 1.3

The current proposal seeks to create a new 145-unit co-living development with shared amenities and separate commercial use within the existing Bugle Pub.
- 1.4

Planning permission was granted for the redevelopment of the Site for a seven storey hotel building with 163 bed spaces
- 1.5

The proposed development is for (the "Proposal"):

Phased redevelopment of the site involving the demolition of Nos. 138–141 and 142–143 Friar Street, partial demolition of No. 144 Friar Street, and erection of a basement and 6-storey building to provide co-living residential accommodation (purpose-built shared living accommodation – Sui Generis use class), together with the partial retention of the former Bugle Public House as a standalone Class E commercial unit.
- 1.6

The purpose of this HTS is to assist with the determination of the application by informing the decision makers on the effects of the proposed development on the historic built environment. It also provides an assessment of the likely impact that the development may have on the surrounding townscape character of Reading in local views.
- 1.7

Specifically, this report:
 - Sets out the relevant legislative and policy framework within which to assess the Site's heritage and townscape impact;
 - Provide a proportionate and robust analysis of the Site and surrounding area's historic development;
 - Offer a full description of the Site and identify relevant designated heritage assets;
- Assess the significance of the Site and its contribution to surrounding townscape and any potential impact on nearby heritage assets; and,
 - Provide a detailed assessment of impact of the proposals on the Site and its setting, and on the character and appearance of the area and its impact on nearby heritage assets..
- 1.8

In doing so, particular regard is given to the provisions of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990. The report also sets out how the proposal complies with the guidance and policy of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024 and local planning policy.
- 1.9

The existing Site and surrounding area was appraised during site visits between April and May 2022 and again March 2026. Research has been carried out at Berkshire Local Archives and through online research and digital archives, including the British History Online, the National Archives, and Kelly's and Post Office Directories Archives at the University of Leicester.
- 1.10

The report is authored by Nairita Chakraborty BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI IHBC; Director at Revive and Tailor, with close liaison with Falconer Chester Hall (Architects) and Daniel Watney Partnership (Planning Consultant). It should read alongside the Design and Access Statement and other documents submitted as part of the application.
- 1.11

The consultancy has worked with the Applicant and design team to understand the proposed development and to provide independent feedback on design throughout its development, as well as on the potential effects on heritage assets and townscape. Through this process, the intention has been to achieve a high quality of design in order to maximise the beneficial effects of the proposed development on heritage assets, townscape and views.
- 1.12

This document therefore, embodies and presents the results, which are a product of the independent professional advice provided throughout the course of the design process. In accordance with guidance, however, the assessments in this report are undertaken on an independent and transparent basis and weigh up both the positive and negative effects of the project.



Figure 1.1 Site shown in red
Source: Google maps

Section 2

Methodology of Assessment.

2 Methodology of Assessment

Methodology of Heritage Assessment

2.1	In assessing impacts on heritage assets (defined in Annex 2 of the Framework) ¹ the first step is to understand the significance of the assets affected and any contribution made by their setting (para 207) ² .	a	To apply the Historic England Guidance as set out in GPA 3 and HEAN 12 and the 'five step' process for assessing heritage assets, their setting and impacts of development on them;	•	Historical interest: An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history, but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.	2.13	The fourth step is to explore ways to maximise enhancement and minimise harm through design alterations or other considerations. Enhancement (see GPA 3, page 14) may be achieved by actions including:
2.2	The decision maker is required to take account of this assessment to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage assets' conservation and any aspect of the proposal (NPPF paragraph 208).	b	To assess whether the proposed development would harm the identified heritage asset's significance, or appreciations of that significance, by generating change within its setting.				removing or re-modelling an intrusive building or feature;
2.3	The approach to the application of the relevant paragraphs of the Framework has been addressed by the Court of Appeal in the Bramshill case ³ (at paragraphs 71 to 81) and recently by Mrs Justice Lang in the London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust case ⁴ (at paragraphs 47 to 53). In particular, the Courts have determined that the decision-maker must adopt a sensible approach to assessing likely harm to a listed building and weighing that harm against benefits,, including design of proposed development.	2.7	The assessment methodology used for assessing the significance of the identified heritage assets and their settings is based on the Historic England's Conservation Principles (both the published version by English Heritage in 2008 ⁶ and the draft revised version by Historic England in November 2017).	2.10	These values correspond to the heritage interests as per best practice guidance. In addition, the extent of value is assessed using six criteria: - The quality and extent of survival of historic fabric. - The extent to which the fabric contributes to understanding of history of place and occupants. - The originality of the design and the contribution of features to that design. - Associations with history, people or events. - Contribution towards landmark qualities and public appreciation.		- replacement of a detrimental feature by a new and more harmonious one; - restoring or revealing a lost historic feature or view; - introducing a wholly new feature that adds to the public appreciation of the asset; - introducing new views (including glimpses or better framed views) that add to the public experience of the asset; - or improving public access to, or interpretation of, the asset including its setting.
2.4	When considering settings of heritage assets, the Court of Appeal in the Castesby ⁵ Estate explicitly rejected the narrow idea that setting is purely a visual or line-of-sight issue. Lord Justice Lindblom ruled that setting is a multi-sensory, three-dimensional concept that includes historical, functional, and spatial relationships. Because setting is defined by how an asset is experienced, the specific architectural quality, massing, materials, and spatial design of the new development must be rigorously scrutinized to understand how it alters that experience.	2.8	Identification of special interest and significance is based on the three heritage interests - historical, archaeological and architectural & artistic - the definitions of these interests are set out in the PPG and cited in section 2 of this report.				
2.5	Whether harm is substantial or less than substantial (to use the terms of the NPPF) is a matter of judgement and the boundary between the two is not always clear cut. Harm is best thought of as a spectrum from negligible at one end to total loss of an asset at the other and the further along that spectrum you are the more important the clear and convincing justification becomes.	2.9	This proposes the use of three heritage interests – historical, archaeological, and architectural and artistic- in assessing what makes a place and its wider context special. These are broadly in line with the values evidential [now archaeological], historical, aesthetic [now architectural and artistic], and communal [now part of historical] – set out in the previous, 2008 version, but are consistent with the heritage interests in the NPPF, the definitions for which are now included in the updated Planning Practice Guidance as cited above. - Archaeological interest: As defined in the Glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework, there will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. - Architectural and artistic interest: These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skill, like sculpture.	2.11	The level of value is assessed using five criteria: high, medium, low, neutral, and negative. - High – the element is critical to understanding of significance. - Medium – the element is important to understanding of significance. - Low – the element makes some limited contribution to understanding of significance. - Neutral – the element is not negative, and could be enhanced to make a positive impact of the understanding of significance. - Negative – the element is harmful or intrusive and detracts from the understanding of significance.	2.14	Options for reducing the harm arising from development may include: - the repositioning of a development or its elements; - changes to its design; - the creation of effective long-term visual or acoustic screening; - or management measures secured by planning conditions or legal agreements.
2.6	In relation to impacts on the identified designated heritage assets and, in accordance with the NPPF and other planning guidance, it is proposed to assess the impact of the development on the heritage assets and their setting in the following way:			2.12	The next step is to understand the impact of the proposal on the significance of the identified heritage assets, their settings. This is undertaken through an understanding of the change in the streetscape including the bulk and mass of the proposal and whether it enhances or detracts from our understanding of the significance of the assets.	2.15	The ultimate policy requirement is to 'sustain the heritage assets significance'. The Framework and the Guidance, alongside the Conservation Principles and related guidance by Historic England, all recognise 'conservation' as the process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance. It is not a process that should prevent change.
						2.16	Paragraphs 214 and 215 address the balancing of harm against public benefits. If a balancing exercise is necessary (i.e. if there is any harm to the asset), considerable weight should be applied to the statutory duty where it arises.

1 See Appendix C
2 Ibid
3 City and Country Bramshill Ltd. v. Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government [2021] EWCA Civ 320
4 London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust v. Minister of State for Housing [2022] EWHC 829 (Admin)
5 Castesby Estates Ltd and SSCLG v Steer [2018] EWCA Civ 1697

6 <https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-principles-sustainable-management-historicenvironment/>



2 | Methodology of Assessment

Townscape Assessment

- 2.17

A townscape assessment involves the measurement of physical environmental effects as experienced by people. The effects of a proposed development on townscape and the urban design of an area are a material planning consideration. Unlike assessment of heritage assets and their setting, this is not a statutory requirement.
- 2.18

High quality design is generally expected to be beneficial to the townscape. When it is related to existing (and valued) local character or historic contexts, however, even a well-designed building has the potential to unacceptably dominate or be incongruous. The appropriateness and quality of the design is, therefore, a key consideration in the assessment of the effects of the proposed development on heritage assets, townscape character and views.
- 2.19

The assessment therefore involves a quantitative, qualitative and perceptual measurement. It is not possible to express the perceptual and qualitative assessment in a scientific manner, but only in professional value judgements.
- 2.20

The final design is assessed in Chapters 6 of this report, taking into account national, regional/strategic and local townscape and heritage policy requirements. The material used to undertake the assessment includes the drawings prepared by Falconer Chester Hall, their Design & Access Statement and Computer Generated Images (CGIs) by Do Digital. Given the scale of the building, the CGIs are considered sufficient for understanding the proposal in its wider context. Whilst these may not be actual views, they help in understanding the relationship of the proposal with the surroundings.
- 2.21

The CGIs represent selected views which illustrate the urban relationships likely to arise between the proposal and its surroundings. Each viewpoint position was chosen to represent 'maximum exposure' of the proposed development and its 'maximum conjunction' with sensitive townscape elements within its context, including heritage assets.
- 2.22

It is acknowledged that the viewers of the images presented may have different responses to the appearance of the proposals, depending on personal aesthetic preferences. This form of presentation has the aim of addressing this factor by first providing the reader with objective evidence of the physical scale of the development, its visibility and likely appearance from key viewpoints. Professional opinion, which may be considered to be more subjective, provides a second stage of the assessment, presented in the accompanying commentary.
- 2.23

It is important to note that the written assessments are not assessments of the CGIs but are of the probable view as experienced from the viewpoint in a 'real-life' sense. The CGIs are used only as a tool for assessment. The assessment commentary that accompanies them is intended to provide *"a clearly expressed and non-technical narrative argument that sets out 'what matters and why' in terms of townscape significance, together with the effects of the development upon them"*⁷. The reader is encouraged to read and understand the assessments in the context of the wider narrative about each view and the CGI in each case. The effects found should not be translated into scoring systems or statistics.

7 Historic England's Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2nd Edition, 2017)



Section 3

History of Site and Surroundings.

3 History of Site and Surroundings

History of surrounding area¹

- 3.1 Reading originated as a Saxon settlement, its name derived from the Old English *Reada ingas* ('the people of Reada'). Its position close to the confluence of the River Thames with the Kennet facilitated riverine trading links with both London and the wider Thames Valley. The settlement was first documented by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in AD 871, when it was occupied by a Viking army, shortly before the Battle of Reading, in which the Saxon King of Wessex, Aethelbert, was defeated.
- 3.2 The Vikings subsequently erected a defensive earthen rampart between the two rivers east of the settlement. Documentary sources record a second Viking incursion in 1006, when the settlement was burnt to the ground.
- 3.3 The Norman taxation document known today as the Domesday Book, which documents the period 1066 - 1086, records two manors in Reading. Within the principal manor, held by the king, there were 55 villagers and 30 smallholders. In addition to the farmland and meadow there was woodland sufficient to support 100 swine, together with four mills and three fisheries.⁵ The smaller manor, which belonged to Battle Abbey (St Martin), comprised nine villagers and eight smallholders. In addition to their farmland there was woodland sufficient to support five swine, two mills and 2½ fisheries together with a church.⁶ The Normans are thought to have built a castle on Castle Hill, initially an earth and timber motte and bailey castle, later replaced in stone, which was probably demolished c.1152 during the civil war in the reign of King Stephen.
- 3.4 Reading Abbey, a royal monastery, endowed by Henry I in 1121-5, was one of the largest monasteries in Europe. The surviving abbey gateway and extensive ruins of the abbey church and abbey complex within its precinct wall lie close to the River Kennet on the east side of the town. In addition to its religious functions, the abbey attracted and promoted commerce not only along the Thames and Kennet rivers but also as a result of its location at the intersection of major roads linking London with Bath, and Oxford with Southampton.
- 3.5 In addition to its religious and royal significance, the abbey developed a planned new town with new streets and burgage plots together with a market place immediately west of its precinct; the principal streets being Friar Street, Broad Street, London Street and the Market Place itself, which attracted visitors and pilgrims from all over Europe. The town prospered in the medieval period and there are numerous documents illustrating friction between the guilds and merchants on the one hand and the Abbot on the other.

¹ Extracted from report by Heritage Collective as part of the consented QVS 1 application. Information has been updated pertaining to the Site in particular where relevant.

- 3.6 A House of Franciscan friars (Grey Friars) had first been established in the town in 1233, at the opposite (west) end of the street leading westwards from St Laurence's church (built in the 1120s adjacent to the abbey) towards Caversham, a street which had been known as New Street (later Friars Street) since at least 1224. The Friary site was enlarged in 1285 because the original site closer to the river was seasonally flooded.⁸ The approximate site of the Greyfriars House lies in the vicinity of No. 65 Friars Street.
- 3.7 Following the dissolution of the monasteries by King Henry VIII in 1538, the abbey was given to the Duke of Somerset as a private house, but having been left vacant was quickly robbed of building stone by the townspeople. Nevertheless some of the buildings, such as the abbot's lodgings were retained for use as occasional royal accommodation. The King gave the town its independence from church authority at this time, and the friary house was given to the mayor and burgesses of Reading as a new guildhall. Although the town initially suffering an economic downturn following the dissolution owing to the lack of pilgrims and visitors, nevertheless the town prospered as a centre of the wool and cloth trade.
- 3.8 As a major thoroughfare and part of the planned medieval town, both sides of Friar Street would have been occupied by shops and houses throughout the medieval period.
- 3.9 The earliest map of Reading, published in John Speed's atlas of Great Britain in 1611 (Fig 3.1) shows that the plan of the town in the early 17th century resembled a triangle with a church roughly at each corner: St Mary's, St Giles' and St Laurence's. The two long roughly north-south sides of the triangle are formed by the two old rivalrous routes mentioned above. The River Kennet, spanned by two bridges (one over each route), flowed through the centre of the town. The northern side of the triangle was Friar Street. The most developed area is shown to be north of the Kennet and west of the site of Reading Abbey. This map identifies and names London Street and Duke Street and illustrates the triangular market place beside St Laurence's. A lane branched westward from London Street to St Giles' Church, the precursor of today's Church Street.
- 3.10 As a result of the Siege of Reading in 1642, during the course of the English Civil War, in which the royalist garrison of the town was defeated, town was penalised by heavy taxation. The cloth trade was particularly badly hit.
- 3.11 The Kennet Navigation, completed in 1723, enabled barges and boats to travel as far as Newbury. Although an iron works had been built in the 18th century, and Simonds' Brewery, the first of several successful breweries for which the town became famous, opened in 1785, the town's prosperity did not fully return until the beginning of the 19th century (1810) when the Kennet and Avon Canal was completed, connecting London via the Thames at Reading with Bristol and the Bristol Channel. Two large companies were established in the town at this time: Suttons Seeds (1806) and Huntley & Palmers Biscuits (1822).



Figure 3.1 John Speed's Map of Reading, 1611
Source: Berkshire Local Archives

3 | History of Site and Surroundings

- 3.12 Transport links were further improved by first the arrival of the Great Western Railway in 1840, followed by the South Eastern Railway in 1849 and The London and South Western Railway in 1856. Reading railway station opened in 1840. A contemporary map by Edward Weller (Fig 3.2) shows the site of the newly built station and approach together with a new road linking the station with Friar Street. The approximate location of the Site is ringed in red.
- 3.13 The censuses show an expanding population throughout the second half of the 19th century, increasing almost threefold from 21,500 in 1851 to 59,000 by 1901.¹⁰ Reading became a county borough under the Local Government Act of 1888. Building to accommodate the expanding population included not only a proliferation of terraced suburban dwellings, but also commercial landmark building in the town such as the Board Schools, banks and shop premises, mainly utilising coloured brick with terracotta dressings.
- 3.14 Civic buildings, including the town hall (built in 1897 by Albert Waterhouse) had been built at the eastern end of Friar Street, close to St Laurence's church, whilst the western half was occupied by theatres and clubs, and what have been termed less salubrious pursuits'.
- 3.15 Properties in Friar Street and Broad Street were demolished at the end of the 19th century in order to create a new shopping thoroughfare linking Broad Street with the railway station. The new street, Queen Victoria Street, was completed in 1903. The work was one of a number of contemporary redevelopment schemes in the town which were sponsored by local Councillor and businessman, J.C. Fidler (of Fidler and Sons' Royal Berkshire Seed Stores). The street was flanked by "matching 4-storey blocks with shops at ground level, constructed in yellow brick with terracotta façades and dressings.
- 3.16 The 1912-13 Ordnance Survey map shows the new street layout for the first time (Figure 8). Nos 1-3 Queen Victoria Street and Nos 146-148 Friar Street comprised a single shop, replacement premises for Arthur Newbury Furnishers.
- 3.17 In the mid-20th century the centre of Reading was redeveloped by demolishing parts of the historic core of the town to provide offices and shopping precincts. The construction of the Inner Distribution Road, which started in 1969, improved traffic circulation but severed links between different areas of the town. More recently, the Oracle Shopping Centre has reinvigorated the town centre but meant the loss of a number of historic buildings including Simonds' brewery on the banks of the River Kennet. The canal became disused and impassable by the 1940s but since 1992 has been reopened for leisure uses following a restoration scheme by the Kennet and Avon Trust.

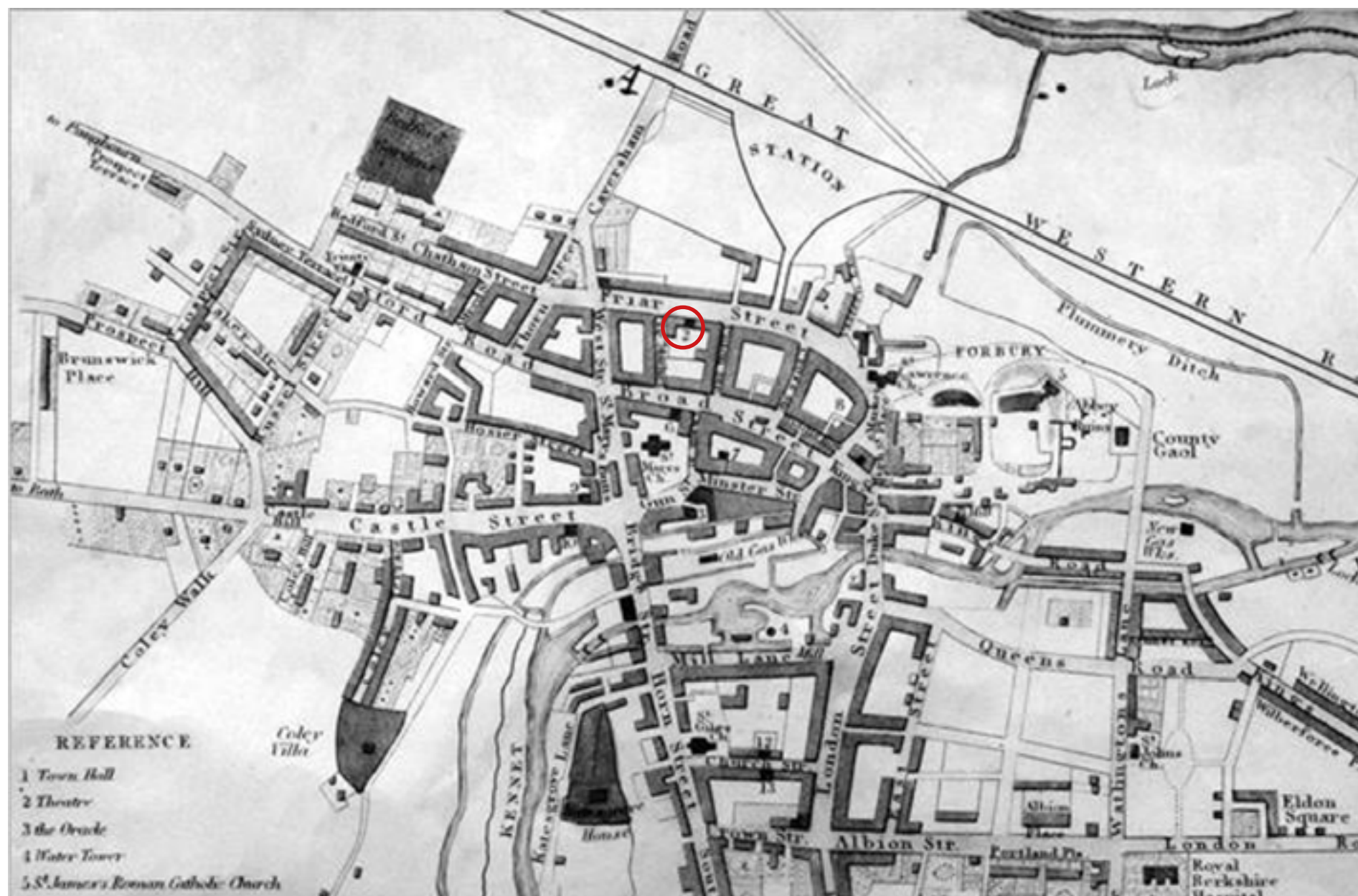


Figure 3.2 Edward Weller's Map of Reading, 1840
Source: Berkshire Local Archives

3 | History of Site and Surroundings

History of the Site

- 3.18
- The Site formed part of Friar's Street, one of the oldest streets in Reading. It is likely that the current layer of buildings along this part is between late 18th Century and early 20th Century.
- 3.19
- The 1802 map by Tomkin (Figure 3.8) is the first detailed plan of the buildings present within the site and indicates both communal market gardening, as well as private, enclosed gardens. The map shows the presence of Fife Court with a building running down the western side of on the same footprint as the present Bugle public house. It is the only remaining example of a number of 19-century courts off Friar Street. The map also illustrates that the separate buildings constructed between Friar Street and Broad Street were built upon previously cultivated land.²
- 3.20
- The Tithe Map on 1847 (Fig 3.8) shows the Site as part of land parcel 56, described as "Block Bounded By Friar Street Union Street Cross Street and Broad Street" owned by Thames Commissioners.
- 3.21
- Further research through Directories (1840-49) show that the properties were leased by the Commissioners to a range of users, for example No 143 was an Accountant's office³; No 139 a restaurant⁴. No 144 (The Bugle) is registered as 'Beer Retailer' in this and subsequent directories. Others have remained shops with No 143 remaining a paint shop (see fig 3.10 and 3.11).
- 3.22
- Detailed mapping from 1853 show that the Site has three parallel courts including one formed between No 143-144. Ball Court is to the west, rear of No 138 and Fife Court is to the east. The buildings fronting to the courts appear to be subdivided into smaller premises indicating that these too had uses, ancillary or unrelated to the buildings along the street frontage.
- 3.23
- The earliest Ordnance Survey large-scale mapping of 1879 (Fig 3.7) shows that both sides of Friar Street were densely packed with properties, with long narrow plots fronting the streets and extending at the rear, often with yards or gardens, often served by narrow access lanes reflecting the burgage plots of the medieval town layout.
- 3.24
- Within the immediate surrounding the Athenaeum is constructed to the east of the Site (now demolished to make way for Queen Victoria Street) and the Royal Horse and Carriage Repository to the north. There are also hotels at the intersection with Station Road, signifying the area's importance for merchants, traders and travellers.

2

Archaeological desk-based assessment, 138-144 Friar Street; Oxford Archaeology.

3

Pigot and Co.'s Royal National and Commercial Directory, 1840-49

4

Ibid



Figure 3.4 Extract from Tomkin's map of Reading, 1802.
Source: Archaeological Desk-based Assessment, 138-144 Friar Street, Reading; Oxford Archaeology



Figure 3.3 Tithe Map of Reading, 1847. The Site forms part of the land parcel number 56 (shown in red) belonging to Thames Commissioners.
Source: National Archives, Kew, London

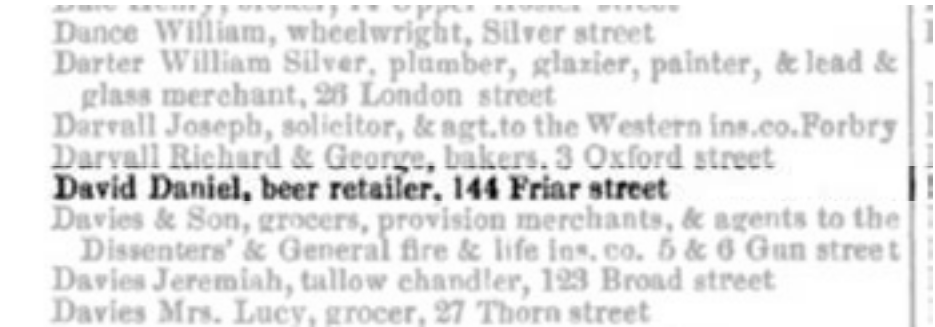


Figure 3.5 Extract from Pigot and Co.'s Royal National and Commercial Directory, 1840-49 showing the proprietor at No 144
Source: University of Leicester, Special Collections Online



Figure 3.6 Extract from Kelly's Directory 1899, Pg 174 showing the proprietors at Nos 138-144
Source: University of Leicester, Special Collections Online



3 | History of Site and Surroundings

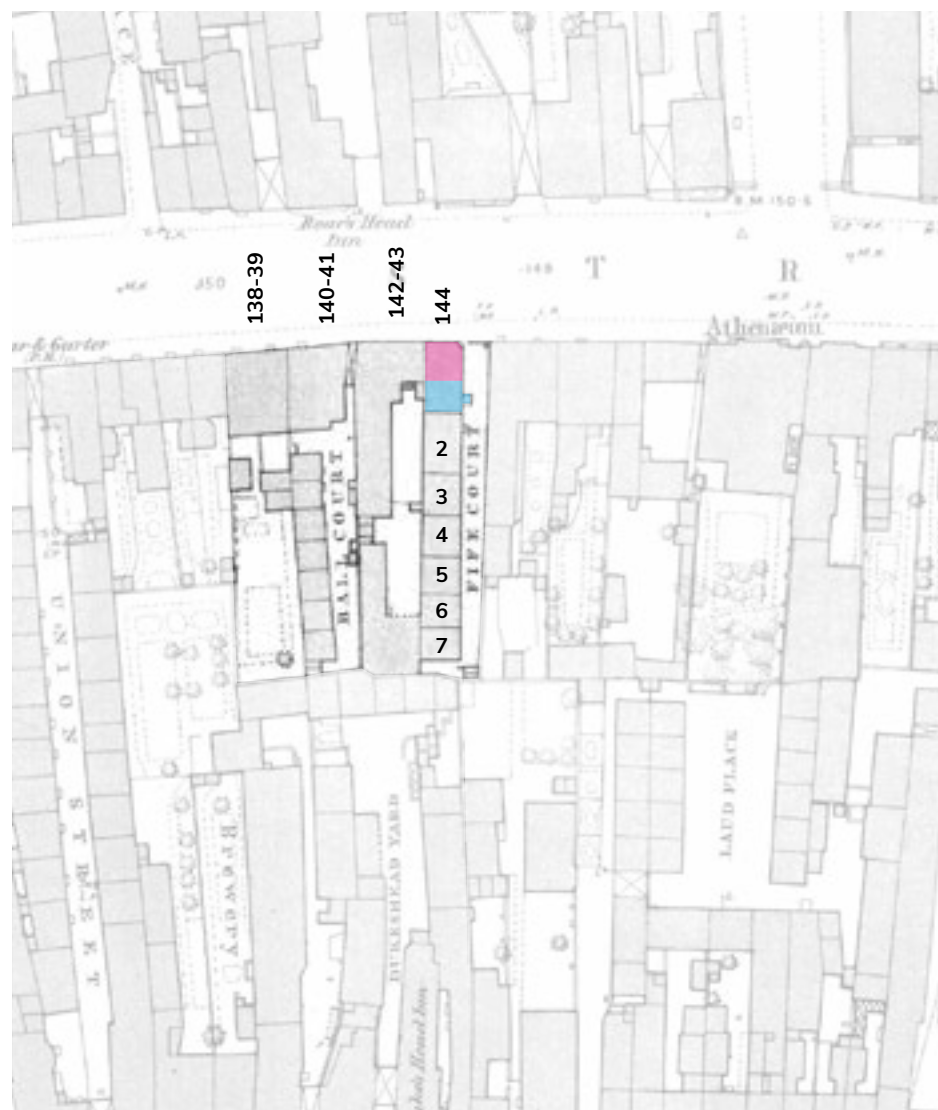


Figure 3.7 Ordnance Survey Map of 1879, 1:500
© Crown copyright and database rights 2019 Ordnance Survey 100035207

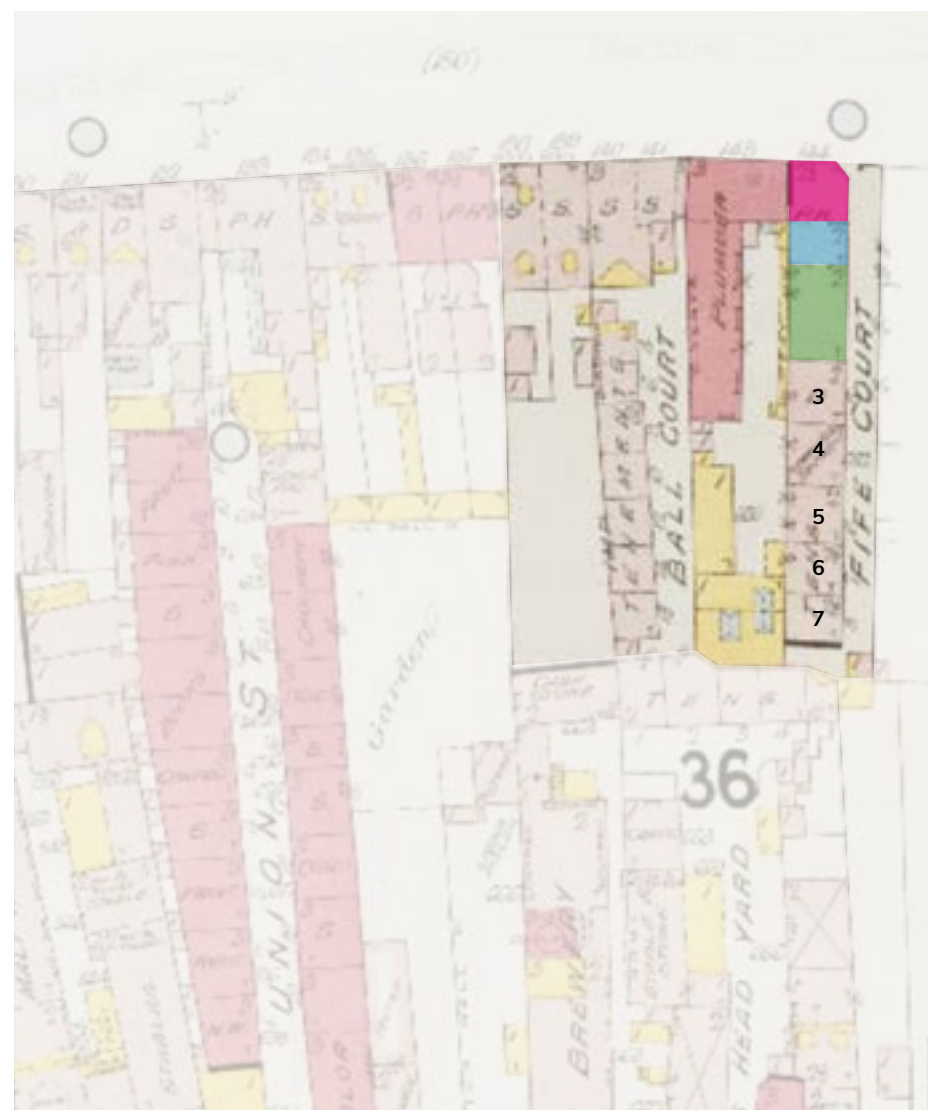


Figure 3.8 Goad's Map of 1895
© Crown copyright and database rights 2019 Ordnance Survey 100035207

- 3.25 The detailed 1879 map also shows Nos 138-139 possibly a pair of houses with rear gardens and ancillary buildings to the rear. Nos 140-141 has a side passage leading to Ball Court, with several tenements. Nos 142-143 has a long extension to the rear, running parallel to Ball Court and a courtyard in the middle. Ball Court and the courtyard to Nos 142-143 are connected through a small gatehouse. Facing the courtyard are the tenements along Nos 2-7 Fife Court. These are a series of two storey cottages registered to various workers- shoemaker, corn porter etc. The Bugle forms the front part of the building (highlighted in pink on Fig 3.7).
- 3.26 The Goad's Map from 1895 (Fig 3.8) shows further subdivision of the plots, with clarity in the curtilages of Nos 138-139, with the rear garden belonging to No 139. Further details of the material and number of windows for insurance purposes are also indicated. Nos 138-139 is two and half storey with tiled roof and two dormer windows (front and back) to No 138 and one rear dormer to No 139. Nos 140-141 are a pair of three storey buildings, with a gable room to the front and a hip roof to the rear of No 140. No 141 appears to have a single storey building to its rear, and a passage providing access to Ball Court. Nos 142-143 is indicated to be three storeys with a rear extension, also at three storeys. Beyond the extension are a series of ancillary buildings (shown in yellow).
- 3.27 The Bugle, at No 144, has a two and half storey frontage with two storey extension to the rear. By this time, the Pub had been extended to include No 2 Fife Court, two storeys. No 3 is a two storey building with tiled roof and two windows per floor, facing the courtyard. No 4 is two storeys with one window per floor, facing the courtyard and registered as a Plumbers store (possibly in relation to the Plumbers shop at No 143 Friar Street).
- 3.28 Nos 5-7 Fife Court appear to be two and two and half storey buildings, registered generically for boarders, with No 5 having two windows per floor, No 6 one window per floor and No 7 with no windows. An important inference is that none of the properties had windows facing Fife Court.

3 | History of Site and Surroundings



Figure 3.9 Ordnance Survey Map of 1900, 1:2500
© Crown copyright and database rights 2019 Ordnance Survey 100035207



Figure 3.10 Ordnance Survey Map of 1912, 1:2500
© Crown copyright and database rights 2019 Ordnance Survey 100035207

- 3.29 Th 1900 OS Map (Fig 3.9) shows the Site much the same, but with the rear garden to Nos 138 and 139 completely built up. The properties beyond No 138 appear to still have retained their rear gardens. It can be inferred, therefore, that the town centre had extended to No 138 Friar Street by this time.
- 3.30 In 1903, The Bugle was described as a beerhouse, owned freehold by Reading brewers, H & G Simonds. The pub had two entrances onto Friar Street and one onto Fife Court and room for travellers on the first floor. It is described as 'Old house in good order, clean outside and inside, newly done up'. This corresponds with the Goads Map and the 1900 OS Map (Fig 3.9), which shows No 2 Fife Court had been included in the Pub's premises.
- 3.31 The Reading magistrates licensing register further gives details of planning applications made in relation to the Pub with an extension in 1912 to include the adjacent cottage (possibly No 3 Fife Court) within its premises. It is possibly during this time that the front elevation was redone as Mock Tudor, to appear 'fashionable' with the times.
- 3.32 The 1930s OS map (Fig 3.11) only shows two tenements, with a new courtyard entrance between the remaining tenements and the Pub. Judging from the sizes, it appears that Nos 5 & 6 had been amalgamated with No 7 remaining at the rear.
- 3.33 The OS Map of 1956-57 (Fig 3.12) shows the rear of Fife Court entirely transformed. No 7 Fife Court appears to have been demolished entirely with Nos 5-6 only partly retained with the courtyard between the two buildings larger in size.
- 3.34 As such, it can be established that the buildings within the Site were shops, with No 144 as a 'beer establishment' since at least the mid 19th Century. The planform of the Site has remained similar since, apart from the courtyard to the rear of No 143 entirely built up, and Ball's Court vanishing entirely. Fife Court has remained as one of the last remaining 'alleys' to the rear of an otherwise busy and active street frontage.
- 3.35 Aerial views taken from Britain from above, dated 1951 shows the Site in its current form with the larger building at 138-142 Friar Street and a series of single storey buildings to the rear. These buildings have been altered repeatedly and beyond recognition.
- 3.36 The series of ancillary buildings to the rear of No 144 are also shown with not much material change. However, there is a light level change between the rear most wing of the tenements to the rear. Further alterations have since occurred with a new terrace installed.



Section 5

Site Description & Existing Condition.

4 Site Description and Existing Condition

Site Location and Context

- 4.1 The Site is located in Reading Town Centre central area near a key junction between Friar Street and Queen Victoria Street.
- 4.2 Friar Street runs south of the Railway Station, perpendicular to Queen Victoria Street and is a primary public transport route within the town centre. Primary uses are commercial on the ground floors, with ancillary or offices to the upper floors.
- 4.3 Within the wider area, the townscape is dominated by the Ibis Hotel directly opposite. Newer developments relating to the Station Square area are also visible, hinting at the transforming context of the historic town centre.
- 4.4 Whilst much of the transformation appears to the west, the historic centre to the east is distinctly visible with the Church of St Laurence terminating the views along Friar Street east. Greyfriar's Church forms the western end of this vista, although it is wholly dominated by Chatham tower further west.
- 4.5 The terracotta buildings along the pedestrianised Queen Victoria street also form a key architectural, accentuated by the traffic movement restricted along Friar Street.



Figure 4.1 Aerial view of Site and its immediate precincts).
Source: Google Earth



Figure 4.2 Site overlooking No 41 New Cross Road.
Source: Satish Jassal Architects



Figure 4.3 Site overlooking new development at Former New Cross Hospital).



Figure 4.4 View of St Laurence Church from Friar Street, looking east



Figure 4.5 Queen Victoria Street elevation

4 | Site Description and Existing Condition

Site description

4.6 The Site contains 3 properties.

138-141 Friar Street

- 4.7 The front elevation of the building is modern and features a three storey and two storey brick frontage, each with a gable roof. Originally three separate properties, these appear to have been amalgamated somewhere between 1931 and 1956.
- 4.8 Although the Reading Council records do not go far enough to provide details of any planning permission for the demolition and redevelopment of the Site, it is likely to have been in the post-war period.
- 4.9 At the time of redevelopment, the buildings were deliberately designed to appear two separate buildings with one gable higher than the other. This was an architectural treatment to breaks up the width of the building.
- 4.10 The ground floor is divided in a asimilar way with the appearance of two shop fronts, although both are for the restaurant/club.
- 4.11 To the rear, the building covers the whole of the property with a flat roofed two storey wing. The main building fronting Friar Street is a steeply pitched T shape in modern tiles. The roof form and the gables give the building a prominent appearance within the street.



Figure 4.6 Front elevation showing No 138-141 Friar Street



Figure 4.7 Front elevation showing No 142-143 Friar Street

142-143 Friar Street

- 4.12 This is a two storey building pitched roof building with the apex running east west. The tall parapet of the front facade hides the roof form entirely. Although heavily altered, its scale and shallow form appear to suggest that this would be an mid Victorian building with a simple frontage.
- 4.13 The front elevation appears to have been re-fronted. It contains two bays with a blank solid section in the middle. It is likely that the properties would have been two smaller units with a party wall in the middle, which has been amalgamated to form one unit. The windows, whilst modern would have been canted which is reflected in the deep reveals.
- 4.14 The ground floor is a modern shop front and it unlikely that any vestige of the previous shop front would have remained.
- 4.15 To the rear, there are a series of single storey buildings form ancillary usage of the shop.

144 Friar Street, The Bugle PH

- 4.16 The Bugle has recently been included in the Council's Local List. Whilst a detailed research¹ on the building's fabric was not deemed necessary for this report, a search on several archived records has been undertaken. Site visits to understand both external and internal fabric were undertaken to further inform the assessment.
- 4.17 It is most likely that the building got license to sell beer following the Beerhouse Act of 1830 which overhauled the system creating looser regulations. This significant rise in the numbers of licensed premises selling alcohol, established them separate from the Taverns and Inns licensed from 1617.
- 4.18 This is reflected in the search in various archives that show the building as 'beer retailer' or 'licensed victualler' rather than under the list of Taverns, Inns and Public Houses. Nevertheless, it is clear that the building has since atleast 1840s sold alcohol from its premises.
- 4.19 Architecturally the building appears to have been much altered. A photo from 1905 (Fig 4.9) shows the earlier elevation with the much smaller dormer to the roof and the timber 'shop' front. The 20th Century alterations include addition of gabled dormer with larger casement windows, new roof tiles with open eaves [suggesting that much of the roof is 20th Century].
- 4.20 Although the corner entrance at ground floor has been retained, the elevation now has brick quoins on either side as well as the central window. The shop front at the ground floor appears to have also been from early 20th Century with applied timber framing. The entrance is now along the party wall and not at the corner.



Figure 4.8 Artist's sketch of the Bugle

1 Paragraph 194 requires the level of detail for any asset to be proportionate to its significance. Since the building is not a designated heritage asset, our research has focused on the building's history rather than detailed analysis of its fabric.



4 | Site Description and Existing Condition



Figure 4.9 Front elevation, the Bugle at 144 Friar Street



Figure 4.10 The Bugle, 144 Friar Street, 1905
 Source: <https://simondsfamily.me.uk/the-brewery-estate/public-house-estate/>



Figure 4.11 Views to and from Fife Court, showing the flank elevation of the Bugle much altered and in poor condition

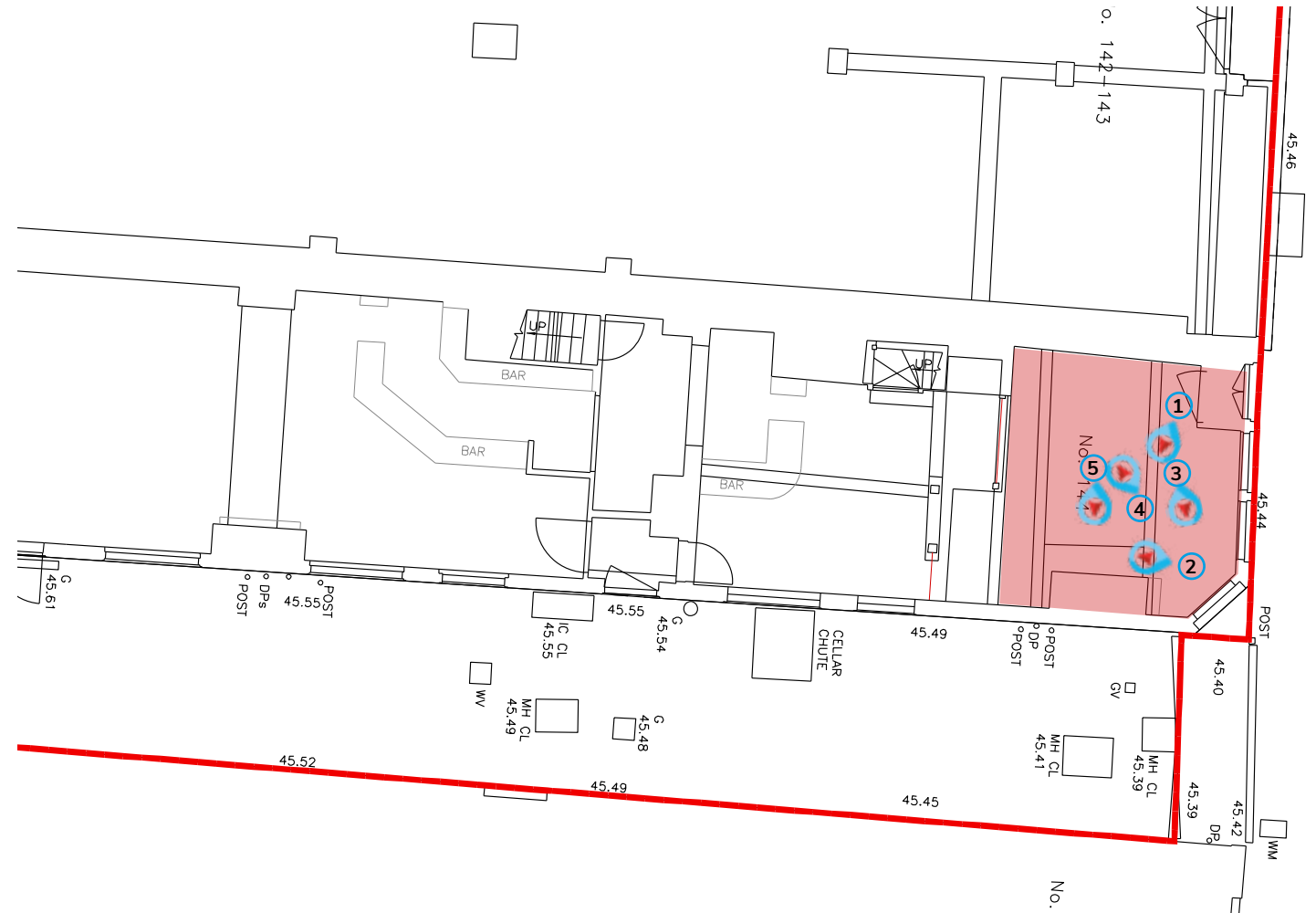


Figure 4.12 Internal photographs of the earliest phase of the building.

4 | Site Description and Existing Condition

Existing Condition

- 4.21 Internally, front part of the room on the ground floor has a low ceiling and lower floor level. Strip out works reveal the fireplace with a higher brick arch behind a later brick front. The alignment of the joists and the brick work appears at least 19th Century. All windows appear to be early 20th Century.
- 4.22 The next phase of the building, the first tenement house included in the pub, shows a glazed brick fire place that was revealed during post the strip out works. There is a central ceiling joist running perpendicular. The floor level is slightly higher. The alignment of the joists and the use of glazed bricks evidences that this part was reconstructed (internally) in the early 20th Century.
- 4.23 The next phase of the building appears to be inter-war, as evident from the internal masonry and external brick work. There are no historic features, apart from a modern staircase, possibly at the location of the original stairs.
- 4.24 Beyond these, the rear wing is almost entirely rebuilt using concrete along with masonry. The original plan form of the tenements is not recognisable with new sub divisions and openings throughout. The roof consists of a tiled roof supported by cut timber roof rafters and existing timber beams spanning between the existing perimeter masonry walls.
- 4.25 Upper floor rooms are completely modernised with no surviving features.
- 4.26 Externally, it is painted about halfway through and is exposed brick towards the rear end. Almost all the windows are blocked along this elevation. There is an entrance to the bars through Fife Court.
- 4.27 The elevation along Fife Court, especially, is marred by later brick work (evident from the fact that they are machine cut and not hand-made as the case would have been in mid 19th Century), cementitious mortar joints throughout, blocked windows and a plethora of service wires and pipes running haphazardly along it. As such, it detracts from the elevation along Fife Court.

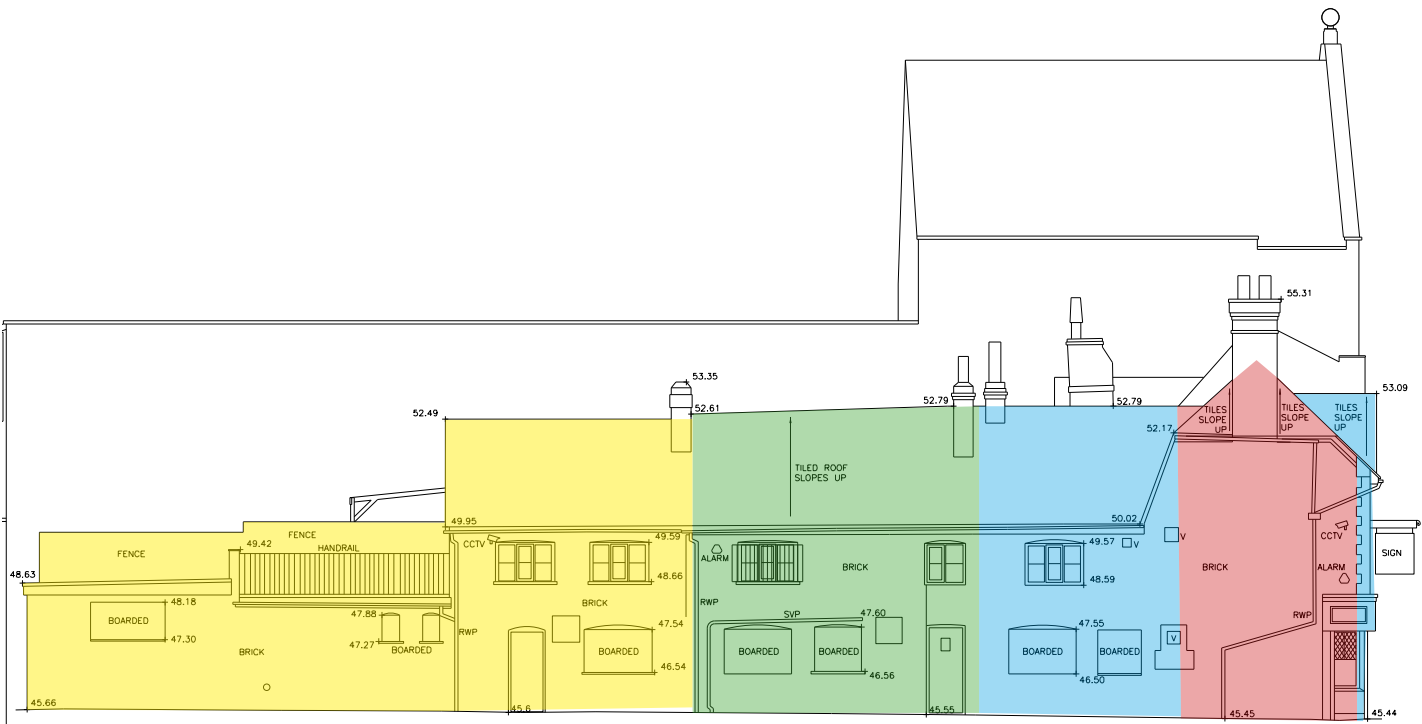


Figure 4.14 Phasing diagram assessed for the Bugle PH, West elevation

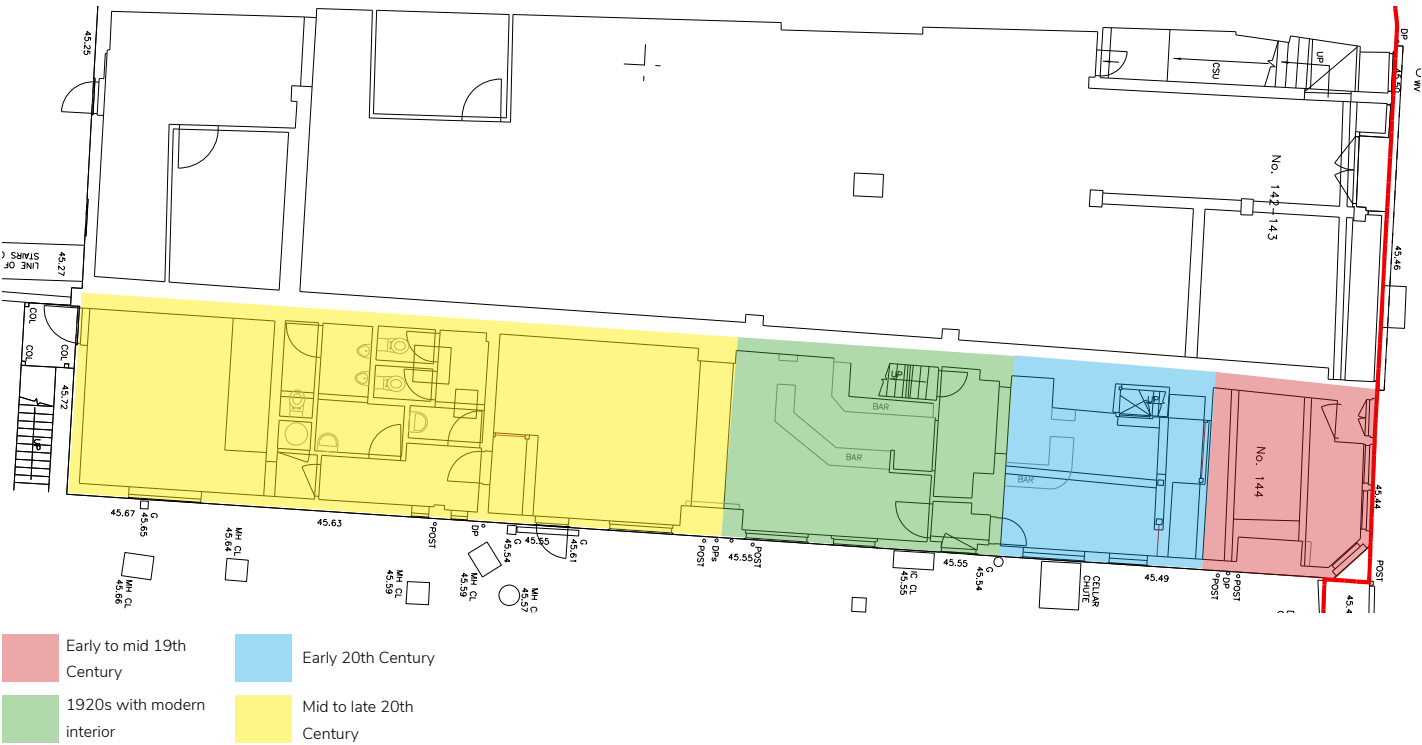


Figure 4.15 Phasing diagram assessed for the Bugle PH, Ground Floor existing



Figure 4.16 Front room on first floor, as existing



Figure 4.17 Rear room on first floor, as existing



Section 5

Assessment of Heritage Significance.

5 Assessment of Heritage Significance

Methodology

- 5.1

The assessment methodology used for assessing the significance of the identified heritage assets and their settings is based on the Historic England’s Conservation Principles (both the published version by English Heritage in 2008¹ and the draft revised version by Historic England in November 2017.
- 5.2

Identification of special interest and significance is based on the three heritage interests - historical, archaeological and architectural & artistic - the definitions of these interests are set out in the PPG and cited in section 2 of this report.
- 5.3

This proposes the use of three heritage interests – historical, archaeological, and architectural and artistic- in assessing what makes a place and its wider context special. These are broadly in line with the values evidential [now archaeological], historical, aesthetic [now architectural and artistic], and communal [now part of historical] – set out in the previous, 2008 version, but are consistent with the heritage interests in the NPPF, the definitions for which are now included in the updated Planning Practice Guidance as cited above.

- Archaeological interest: As defined in the Glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework, there will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.
 - Architectural and artistic interest: These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skill, like sculpture.
- 5.4

These values correspond to the heritage interests as per best practice guidance. In addition, the extent of value us assessed using six criteria:

- Historical interest: An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation’s history, but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.
- 5.5

The level of value is assessed using five criteria: high, medium, low, neutral, and negative.

- 1 High – the element is critical to understanding of significance.
 - 2 Medium – the element is important to understanding of significance.
 - 3 Low – the element makes some limited contribution to understanding of significance.
 - 4 Neutral – the element is not negative, and could be enhanced to make a positive impact of the understanding of significance.
 - 5 Negative – the element is harmful or intrusive and detracts from the understanding of significance.

Identification of Heritage Assets within the Site

- 5.6

There are no listed buildings within the Site, nor does it lie within a conservation area. However, No 144, The Bugle PH has been included in the Council’s Local List. The Committee Report confirming the building’s inclusion in the Local List states (para 4.3.2):

“Whilst there have been a number alterations to the building since this period, including internal alterations to the bars and smoke room, as well as external alterations such as the dormer window, some elements that contribute to the heritage significance remain substantially complete. The original layout of the commercial buildings has been retained. The 19th / early 20th century structures show an important development of the provision of public houses and related activity to the community of Reading. The building also retains important elements such as flat clay tiles and a single central timber framed window facing Friar Steet, as well as the angled corner at the entrance to Fife Court. Its positive impact on the character and streetscape of Friar Street remains largely intact. It is therefore considered that the buildings fulfil the criteria for the period of 1840-1913.”
- 5.7

For the purposes of this assessment, it is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset.
- 5.8

The Bugle PH, although much altered, has communal and historic value. This is derived from its use as a beer house and the collective memory it evokes amongst its patrons within the area. Architecturally, however, the various alterations mean that its authenticity is limited.
- 5.9

Internally the rear wing has no surviving historic fabric. Much has been modernised to create ancillary flats and various other accommodation. The roof structure also appears to have been modernised, some principle rafters and timber beams appearing to be infested. It has no vestige of the tenements and is of little value.
- 5.10

Additionally, Fife Court is considered to be of some value. Historic maps show several small courts and yards to the rear of the properties along Friar Street. Most have now been built over and disappeared. Fife Court, however, has been retained, although it is not thoroughfare and appears unkempt and unsafe.
- 5.11

Overall, the building has historic and communal value but its architectural interest is limited.

Heritage Assets within the setting of the Site

- 5.12

There are several listed buildings within the context of the Site as shown in Fig 4.7. It is not possible to document all of them within this assessment. As such only those buildings that may be potentially impacted upon by the development are included below. It should be noted that this is in no manner an exhaustive list and further townscape assessment has therefore been provided to address the wider context.
- 147 Friar Street
- 5.13

147 Friar Street was grade II listed in December 1978 (UID: 1113488), it’s List Description reads:

“Circa 1880s. 3½ storey commercial frontage. Painted brick with stone voussoirs and dressings. Cornice and parapet. 3 high segmental headed dormers with ramped moulded coping between and modillion cornices, centre 2-light. These and 3 pairs of windows on 2nd floor are plate glass sashes. 4 depressed arches on 1st floor under cornice and fascia with outer pilasters and dividing fluted columns with Corinthian caps. Cornice and fascia over ground floor shop front of similar pattern with recessed entrance. The 2 storey shop front is the main interest of this building and it is included for that reason.”
- 5.14

As indicated by the List Description, the significance of 147 Friar Street primarily relates to the architectural quality of the 1880s front elevation, particularly the double height colonnade shop front and the 3 segmental headed dormer windows that feature moulded coping between and modillion cornices.
- 5.15

The building is a good example of a late 19th century commercial premises and this provides the structure with a degree of historic (illustrative and associative) interest.
- 5.16

The building forms part of the Phase 1 of the project (QVS 1).

1 <https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-principles-sustainable-management-historicenvironment/>



5 | Assessment of Heritage Significance

Queen Victoria Street

- 5.17 1-15 Queen Victoria Street and 148 Friar Street are part of a wider grade II designation which encompasses:
- 1-31 and 2-32 Queen Victoria Street;
 - 148, 149 and 150 Friar Street; and
 - 24-28 and 35-38 Broad Street.
- 5.18 These buildings, and the wider listed group, is of considerable architectural quality, primarily deriving from the quality and form of its front elevation which includes brickwork, terracotta, decorative gables, granite pilasters and original windows.
- 5.19 Despite the changes to the shopfronts, the terrace remains as a good example of an early 20th century commercial premises and this bestows a degree of historic (illustrative and associative) interest.
- 5.20 The rear of the listed building within the site has been heavily altered and demonstrates a basic, rudimentary design of limited architectural merit with blank brick elevations, modern windows and a detracting fire escape walkway. All of the rear chimney stacks have been removed and the roofs altered with new skylights and vents following the removal of the dormer windows. Nonetheless, the rear of the elevation is of some value, albeit to a significantly lesser degree than the front.
- 5.21 The rear elevation of no.15 Queen Victoria Street retains more of its original rear composition with attractive brick-faced dormer windows and is of more architectural value than the rest of the terrace within the site.

St Laurence's Church and Town Hall.

- 5.22 St Laurence's Church and the adjacent Town Hall complex are the key buildings of this character area. The early 12th century church looks down the Market Place and overlooks Town Hall Square. Originally the outer gate of Reading Abbey was attached to its south flank. Along the south side of the church, a covered walkway was built by the mathematician John Blagrave in 1619, known as Blagrave's piazza. Later the parish stocks stood beneath it. The walkway was demolished in 1867.
- 5.23 The collection of municipal buildings in Blagrave Street is arranged around an 18th century town hall. In 1785 the old town hall in the upper storey of the Abbey Hospitium was demolished and a new one was built, now known as Victoria Hall. It was rebuilt in an Italianate style in 1864 to accommodate the Father Willis Organ.
- 5.24 In 1875 a new building designed by Alfred Waterhouse with bricks from the Reading firm of Colliers was completed. Waterhouse wrapped his new building around the earlier town hall and carefully placed the clock tower for views from Friar Street and Market Place.
- 5.25 In the next few years, further buildings were added to the complex. A Public Library and Museum by Thomas Lainson was added in 1883-4 and an Art Gallery by W.R.Howell in 1897. This group of buildings, decorated with a lively display of red and blue bricks and terracotta is one of the defining images of Reading's architecture. The pairing of the stone and flint medieval church tower and Waterhouse's red and blue brick clock tower display a lively contrast of colour and building materials, both in a Gothic style.
- 5.26 These group of buildings are of exceptionally high significance, and derive their interest from archaeological, architectural and historic values.



Figure 4.18 Map showing designated and non-designated assets

5 | Assessment of Heritage Significance

Summary of Significance and Site's contribution	
Site's contribution to the setting of assets	
5.27 The Site forms part of the immediate context of No 147 Friar Street and 1-15 Queen Victoria Street.	5.32 Overall, within the Site, the frontage of No 144, the Bugle PH, is considered to have some historic and communal value. Other than that, the architectural and historic value of No 138-143 is neutral at best, in that they follow a similar grain and urban form prevalent along Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street. The rhythm of the built form in particular is of importance which appears congruent within the wider area.
5.28 The two Grade II listed buildings are in a key position at the corner of the Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street. The remaining Friar Street buildings, alongside those within the Site, comprise of varying ages, heights, widths and design. However, they do represent the commercial core of Reading and the retail centre of the town.	5.33 The unkempt nature of Fife Court and the rear buildings detract from the wider area and are of no significance.
5.29 Together, the buildings also form part of the street which was one of the oldest routes connecting the Greyfriar's Church with St Laurence. This was a historic route which was used by several monks and priests and holds high significance for the history of the area. Views out of St Laurence Church and the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area are available along Friar Street, again signifying the historic links and the medieval street pattern of the area.	5.34 The Site forms part of the setting of the key listed buildings along Queen Victoria Street and Friar Street. Their vertical rhythm and retail use contributes to the historic commercial core of the town.
5.30 Although the Site does not itself contribute to the route, its building line and retail use forms part of the setting, linking the two Churches together. Views of the precincts of St Laurence are available to and from the Site. This view is considered to be key in understanding the medieval street and routes and the existing building line contributes to the same.	5.35 The current building line of the buildings within the Site allow views of St Laurence Church to be appreciated along Friar Street which contributes to these highly significant group of buildings, forming the medieval core of the town.
5.31 Apart from the building line and the frontage of No 144, the Bugle PH, the Site's contribution to the setting of the surrounding assets is limited. Although Fife Court is one of the remaining historic alleys in the area, its current condition and unkempt appearance detracts from the historic setting of the area. Additionally, the rear of the buildings appear haphazard and piecemeal, not contributing to the area or the immediate townscape.	



Section 7

Heritage & Townscape Impact Assessment.

6 Heritage & Townscape Impact Assessment

Methodology

- 6.1 The impact assessment uses the methodology set out in paragraphs 193 to 196 of the NPPF (whereby relevant) as its basis and is applied with the interpretation established by current case law.
- 6.2 Historic England Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision Taking in the Historic Environment provides information to assist in implementing historic environment policy in the National Planning Policy Framework and the related guidance given in the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). These include; assessing the significance of heritage assets, using appropriate expertise, historic environment records, recording and furthering understanding, neglect and unauthorised works, marketing and design and distinctiveness.
- 6.3 It provides a suggested staged approach to decision-making where there may be a potential impact on the historic environment:

1 "Understand the significance of the affected assets;

2 Understand the impact of the proposal on that significance;

3 Avoid, minimise and mitigate impact in a way that meets the objectives of the Framework;

4 Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance;

5 Justify any harmful impacts in terms of the sustainable development objective of conserving significance and the need for change;

6 Offset negative impacts on aspects of significance by enhancing others through recording, disseminating and archiving archaeological and historical interest of the important elements of the heritage assets affected.'

Summary of Proposals

- 6.4 Following the successful completion of 1-15 Queen Victoria Street and 147-146 Street (Phase 1(QVS1)), this Statement has been written in support of a revised scheme at No 138-141 Friar Street (QVS 2).
- 6.5 The Site benefits from a previous permission [Ref: PL/22/1235] for:

"Demolition of No's 138-141 & 142-143 Friar St, partial demolition of No. 144 Friar St and erection of ground, mezzanine and 1st to 6th floor (7 storey) hotel building with 163 bedspaces (Class C1), with ancillary ground floor lounge, bar and restaurant and associated works".
- 6.6 This permission has now expired and the Applicants are seeking a different scheme to create co-living apartments. The current scheme is for a lower building, at six storeys, with similar elevation treatment in terms of vertical proportions to the consented scheme.
- 6.7 Given the residential use, the façade has been simplified but with subtle hints of verticality which follows the rhythm of the street and the established urban grain. The materiality is to remain red brick which would be contextual with the wider area and contrasting brick detailing, remaining congruous with the street frontage.
- 6.8 Fenestration has also been simplified, using a more domesticated proportion, reflecting the change of use from the consented scheme.
- 6.9 Along Fife Court, there is an increment in the level of demolition of the Bugle façade. This would mainly relate to the 1920s brick façade, beyond the original building from the 19th Century. The reason for this is the floor to ceiling heights of the residential use, which cannot be integrated with the Bugle's existing levels.
- 6.10 The proposals have been presented to the Council as part of the pre-application process as well as the Council's Conservation Area Advisory Committee.



Figure 7.1 Consented scheme
Source: FCH Architects



Figure 7.2 Pre-application Scheme, Dec 2025 [Friar Street Elevation]
Source: FCH Architects



Figure 7.3 Pre-application Scheme, Dec 2025 [Fife Court Elevation]
Source: FCH Architects

6 | Heritage & Townscape Impact Assessment



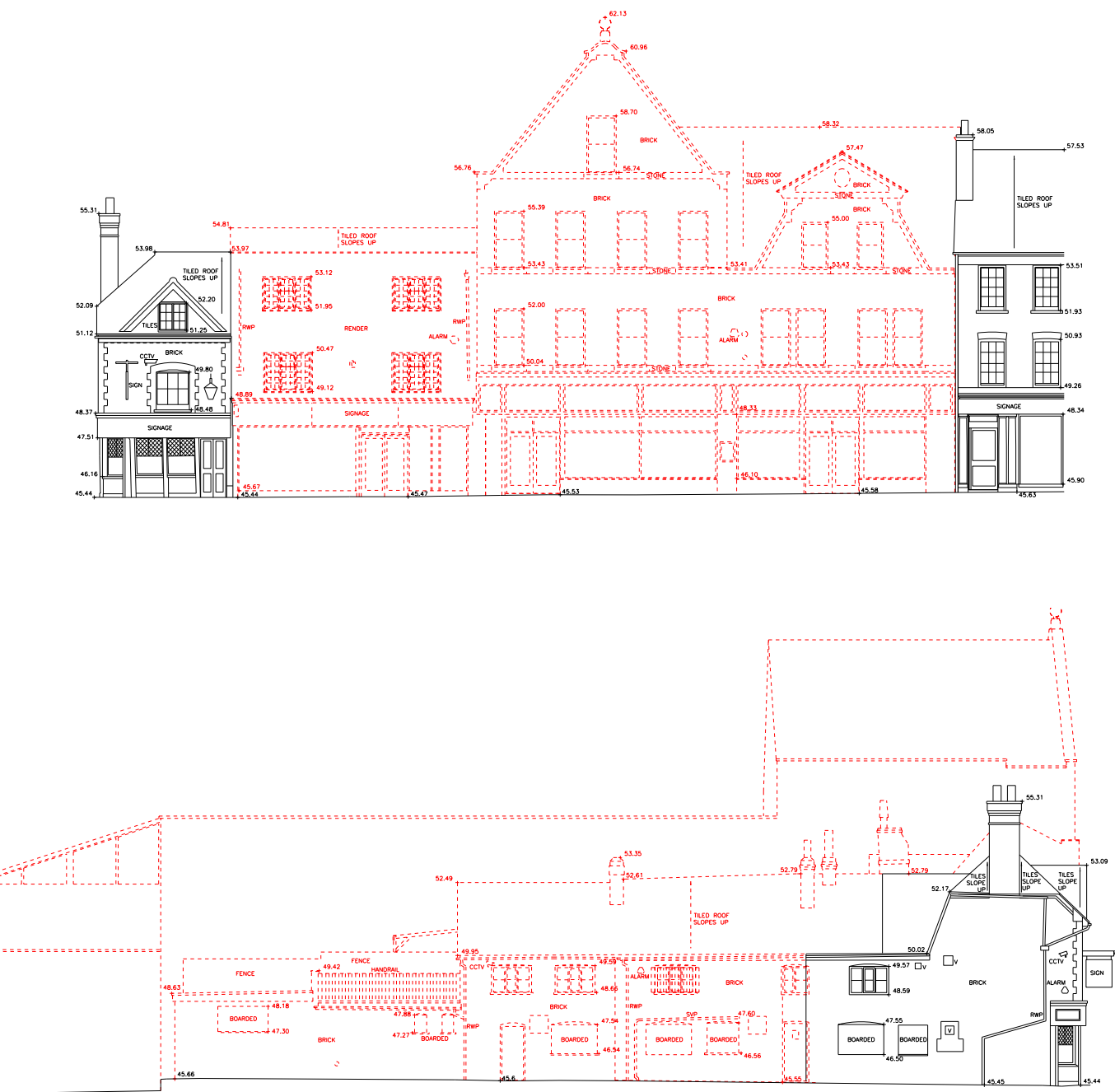
Pre-application Advice

- 6.11 Throughout the design development, the Applicant and the team have liaised with the Council Officers to achieve an optimum proposal for the Site. Site visits with Conservation Officer and Planning Officer were conducted where the proposal was discussed in detail, along with observations made within the interior of the Bugle. Further meetings were held with the Council's Design Review Panel and the Conservation Area Advisory Panel.
- 6.12 The reduced massing and the treatment of the proposal was welcomed in townscape terms. The 'domestication' of the front elevation to reflect the residential use of the proposal was also welcomed, reducing the 'plinth' (ground) level to single storey- in line with the Friar Street frontage.
- 6.13 It was observed that whilst the use of two tones of brick was appropriate, it did not create enough contrast as is reflected in the more decorative Victorian buildings within the wider area.
- 6.14 The verticality of the roof form was also raised as a concern. In long views along Friar Street, this was considered to appear ajar with the steep sloping roofs in the area.
- 6.15 In terms of the treatment of Bugle, the retention and reuse of the building's oldest part was welcomed. Concerns were raised with regards to the extent of the side elevation being demolished. Following further detailed observation of the stripped out interior gave clear indication of the phasing of the building and the limited level of historic fabric within the rear part of the building. Subtle design interventions, however, have been introduced to address the same.
- 6.16 Following discussions with the Council Officers and advice received from Conservation Area Advisory Committee, the proposals were updated. Key changes relating heritage and townscape included:
- Sloping the roof to reflect the sloped roof forms of the street.
 - Introduction of brick panelling at the lower level of the fenestration to contextually refer to the existing Bugle elevation.
 - More contrast in brickwork on the front elevation along Friar Street, reflecting the prevalent animation in the nearby Victorian architecture.

Impact of Proposed Development

- 6.17 The main heritage impact of the revised proposal would be to the non-designated heritage asset, The Bugle PH at No 144 Friar Street.
- 6.18 The previous scheme already established demolition of the flank elevation, but retained part of the façade from 1920s. The current proposal takes this back to the 19th Century elevation, whilst creating a more proportionate relationship with the rear of the proposed residential development. This would significantly improve the appearance of the Fife Court when viewed from Friar Street.
- 6.19 Similar to the consented scheme, the original part of the Bugle would be retained and refurbished for a new commercial use, separate to the residential use. This would retain the historic and communal value the current building holds. As part of the consented scheme, and the strip out works, the building has already been documented.
- 6.20 Unlike the consented scheme, the current 1920s elevation would be retained and repaired. In doing so, the most historic parts of the Bugle would be retained and used as a separate commercial unit.
- 6.21 The elevation beyond 1930s would be demolished. Although, the built form follows the tenements, none of the original historic fabric remains, internally or externally. The repeated interventions, for the building to continue to be used as a pub, has led to piecemeal alterations to an extent that the original form is no longer legible. All external brick work is modern masonry with new fenestration introduced along Fife Court (as evidenced from the archive research, the Fife Court elevation was blank with no openings). The original courtyard form of the tenements is completely lost.
- 6.22 At least from 1930s, the tenements have been part of the Pub. As such, even in living memory, the use of the building is associated with the Pub and not as tenements. It is, therefore, considered that the demolition of the rear would cause very low level of harm.

6 | Heritage & Townscape Impact Assessment



- 6.23 This harm would be restricted to the historic and social value of the tenements, since no physical historic fabric survives. This Statement has documented, in detail, the original form and layout of the tenements (see Chapter 3) and the phasing of the Bugle through the 20th Century. As such, the very low level of harm is mitigated through this documentation.
- 6.24 In design terms, the single storey brick elevation would reflect the lower part of the tenement block, with the fenestration reflective of the Bugle.
- 6.25 Additionally, the retention and repair of the oldest two phases of the Bugle and its operation as a separate commercial unit would be considered a heritage benefit. This would reinstate the historic use of the building, although it may not be operating as a pub.
- 6.26 The reduced scale of the proposal, particularly along Fife Court, is considered to be a heritage benefit, in comparison to the consented scheme, the reduced mass behind the Bugle would allow it to be read as a stand alone building as it does presently, retaining its character and historic associations.



6 | Heritage & Townscape Impact Assessment



Friar Street Elevation - Existing



Friar Street Elevation - Previously approved hotel



Friar Street Elevation - Current co-living



Fife Court Elevation - Existing



Fife Court Elevation - Previously approved hotel



Fife Court Elevation - Current co-living

6 | Heritage & Townscape Impact Assessment

Assessment against Policies (Heritage)

Statutory Duties - The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

6.27 In accordance with the relevant duties of the 1990 Act it has been demonstrated that the development and design of the proposals have had special regard to the desirability of preserving the special interest of the listed buildings, conservation area and their settings. The proposals have sought to avoid and minimise any further harm, and also to ensure that the proposals sustain the heritage asset's significance.

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) (As amended)

6.28 In accordance with the requirements of GPA 3 and NPPF, all the heritage assets likely to be affected by the proposal have been identified and their significance assessed proportionately.

6.29 The proposed scheme has taken account of the key principals set out in paragraph 210, which encourages proposals to consider the desirability of sustaining and also enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; supporting the positive contribution that the conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities, including their economic vitality; and, also the desirability of new development making its own positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

6.30 Annex 2 of the NPPF defines 'conservation' as the process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance. It is not a process that should prevent change, where proposals and the design have been well-informed and considered in light of the Site's particular heritage significance and relative sensitivities, and also forms part of a wider scheme that offers a significant number of heritage benefits.

6.31 Accordingly, this proposal has been designed after careful understanding of the significance of the surrounding designated heritage assets as well as the Site's own local heritage interest. Interventions proposed would retain the most significant and historic part of the Bugle, a locally listed building.

6.32 The proposed demolition of the flank elevation along Fife Court has been considered carefully in context of limited survival of legible plan form and fabric. Whilst its loss would cause very low level of harm to the locally listed building, this is also a great opportunity to consider the oldest and most significant parts of the building and restore it for a new use.

6.33 Paragraph 212 states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. It emphasises that the weight given to an asset's conservation should be proportionate to its significance.

6.34 Proportionate to the significance of the locally listed building and its contribution to the setting of surrounding designated heritage assets, the very low level of harm caused due to the partial demolition of the flank elevation of the Bugle has been great weight.

6.35 It is considered that the restoration of the earliest phases of the building, and what remains specifically in the collective memory of its patrons would be a heritage benefit. Additionally, the design of the new elevation subtly reminding of the brick tenements along Fife Court, would be also provide a better understanding of the original buildings and help sustain the significance of the non-designated heritage asset.

6.36 Paragraph 216 requires a balanced judgment for proposals that affect non-designated heritage assets, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

6.37 It is considered that the reduced massing of the revised scheme along with specific restoration works to the Bugle would result in considerable heritage benefits that would outweigh the very low level of harm resulting from the partial demolition of the flank elevation.

6.38 Within the Local Plan, the most relevant local policies in considering the proposal would be Policies EN1, EN4 and EN6. These require proposals in areas characterised by heritage assets to make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities.

6.39 As demonstrated above, the proposals have been informed by a detailed understanding of the history and development of the area. Facade studies and materiality have been carefully considered and incorporated within the proposed architectural language. The form of the proposal follows the building line of the street frontage and the rhythm of the bays and party walls. This has resulted in a proposal that is of high quality and enhances the historic setting of the town centre as well as the setting of the listed buildings in accordance with policies EN1 and EN6.

6.40 Policy EN4 notes that where some loss or harm to locally important heritage asset is permitted, recording of the heritage asset should be undertaken. Additionally, replacement buildings are required to draw upon heritage elements of the previous design, incorporating historical qualities that made the previous building significant.

6.41 As demonstrated above, the most valued parts of the Bugle PH would be retained, restored and serve as an independent unit. This would allow new use to this vacant building, retaining its townscape and historic contribution to the area. Parts that are proposed to be demolished have been documented within this Statement, allowing for the netter understanding of the building including parts better understanding of the interiors that are currently inaccessible to the members of public. It is, therefore, in accordance with Policy EN4 of the Local Plan.

Townscape Analysis

6.42 The Site forms part of Reading's Central Core. Historic evolution this area is discussed in Section 3. It is nestled between a diverse range of uses and architectural typology which as described before, has emerged through a process of rapid change in the area's fortunes.

6.43 This urban structure expanded "as a grid of north-south and east-west routes, deriving from the original river crossing points."¹ These blocks have been developed and redeveloped over time by multiple land owners in variety of plot sizes with uses based on the 'trend' of occupation. The urban grain, as a result, has remained 'human scaled'.

6.44 With the railways, and later the Distributor Road (IDR) built in 1969, the grid was fragmented, with the current 'central core' south of the railway station and contained within the IDR. However, the core has remained fine grained with a generally human scale height.

6.45 The Council's Tall Buildings Strategy identifies 26 different character areas within the borough. The Site forms part of Character Area 3 [Friar Street]. The architectural style described within this documents states:

"The street has been redeveloped over many decades and as such the building frontage line has not been retained consistently and the architectural style is very varied. Some Victorian façades remain above the shop frontages but in many cases the architecture is undistinguished."

6.46 In relation to urban grain and townscape, the document states

"The tightly packed buildings and the relatively low skyline (generally 4-6 storeys) creates a medium scale townscape"

6.47 The document describes the townscape sensitivity as medium and states:

"There is a fairly consistent, low rise roof line which is occasionally punctuated with views of taller structures e.g. Ibis hotel. Where the tall structures are visible, they detract from the cohesive character of the shopping street and are overbearing features of an uncharacteristically large scale. Therefore further tall buildings would exacerbate this characteristic further."

1 City Centre Framework, Reading Council, 2008



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- 6.48 Friar Street is characterised by continuous retail frontage with a higher ground floor and wide pavements. The frontage to the south side follows the street with a slight bend, which provides oblique views. The built form appears more uniform, with a brick upper level and gabled roofline.
- 6.49 The architectural language is varied but generally interesting and animated along the south side. There is evidence of redevelopment with some buildings dating from 1840 and others later 19th Century with High Gothick architectural detailing. There are some modern buildings along the south side, but these general follow the datum of height at about four to five storeys.
- 6.50 The north side of the street, however, is more varied with most of the buildings dating from the post-war period. Their quality and appearance is poor.
- 6.51 Towards the east end of the street, and opposite the Site, the glazed and stepped upper floors of the Novotel are a prominent feature on the skyline. The building rises well above the established skyline at 14 storeys and is seen from up and down long views from Friar Street and dominated the skyline intrusively.
- 6.52 Overall, along the south side of Friar Street, there is homogeneity in the fine urban grain and height generally varies between three and six storeys.



Figure 7.4 Emerging Context showing allocated opportunity sites and identified areas suitable for tall buildings
Local Plan, Reading Council

Wider Context

- 6.53 With the wider area, the character is varied with a mix of modern and historic buildings. Whilst the historic core is dominated by the medieval buildings, the retail town centre is primarily late-Victorian and early-20th century. It is dominated by bricks of deep orange-reds, silver-greys and yellow buff, often used together or in patterns. There are several architectural features on key corners that include raised turrets, expressive roofscapes and decorative entablatures.
- 6.54 However, there are many examples of later structures that are larger in their urban form and scale which also form the modern character of the town centre.
- 6.55 Opposite the Station Square, the newly finished Thames Tower is 15 storeys tall. Although this is proposed to be part of a cluster of tall buildings within the Station Square regeneration area, views of the building are available from Queen Victoria Street.
- 6.56 Along Station Road, Brunel House is a post-modern building at six storeys. Its form is that of a large office block with taller floor to ceiling heights, making the building more prominent.
- 6.57 The overall character of the area is eclectic with various phases of developments, each phase with its own architectural language. Scale and materiality is generally consistent with four to six storey buildings in brick with stone dressings and other politely detailed features. Although varied in architecture, there is consistency in proportionality, fenestration and materiality and is considered to be of medium sensitivity.

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Emerging Context

Station/River Major opportunity area

- 6.58 The Council's adopted Local Plan has identified the area around the Station as a major opportunity area and envisions:
- The station/river area will be a flagship scheme, extending the centre and providing a mixed use destination in itself and centred on the new station and public transport interchange. It will integrate the transport links and areas northwards to-wards the River Thames and into the heart of the centre.*
- 6.59 The Council has also indicated this area as a tall building cluster and expects proposals to deliver high-density development. The tall building strategy indicates a mid-rise datum along Friar Street slowly rising towards the Station area.

Station Hill (Outline Planning Permissions ref. 151426 and ref. 151427)

- 6.60 Outline permission for the mixed-use regeneration to the area referred to as Station Hill 1 received a resolution to grant planning permission in 2008. However, the application was withdrawn following the decision by the Secretary of State to 'call in' the proposal. A subsequent application, referred to as Station Hill 2, was then submitted and this sought outline permission for another mixed-use redevelopment. This scheme was granted permission in October 2011.
- 6.61 A new outline application was submitted (Ref: 151426/OUT) which sought approval for residential and retail use. An outline planning permission (Ref: 130436) was granted in January 2015 for redevelopment of the whole of Station Hill as offices, retail, leisure and residential, with associated infrastructure and public realm. This was accompanied by a section 106 agreement.

Bristol & West Arcade 173-175 Friar Street and nos 27-32 Market Place

- 6.62 The Council has recently granted (July 2021) planning permission for the redevelopment of site to provide an eight storey building to provide a hotel of up to 182 beds, including a bar/restaurant/gym at ground floor; and demolition of rear parts of 29-31 and 32 Market Place, the change of use of the retained units at 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.

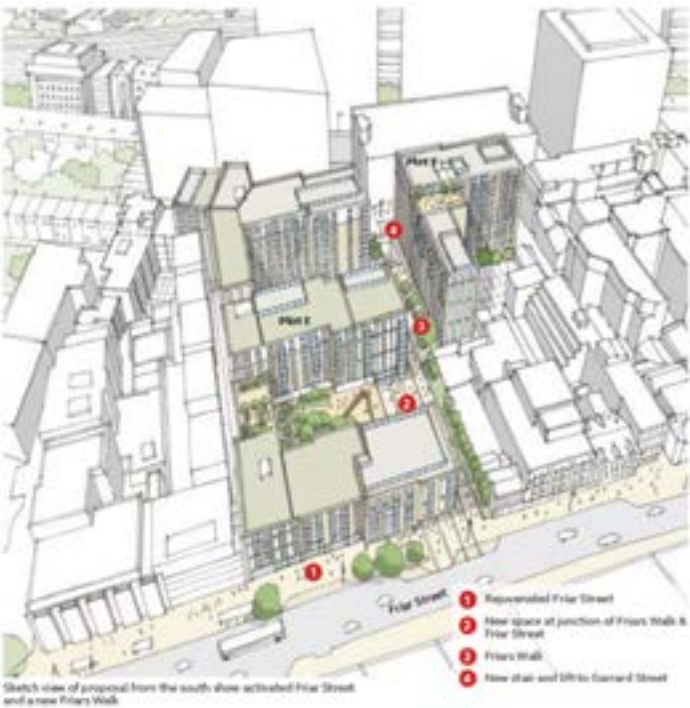


Figure 7.5 Proposed Plot E development as part of Station Hill Phase 3 [taken from DAS submitted as part of the application]



Figure 7.6 Emerging context as part of Station Hill Phase 3, seen from Town Hall Square [taken from ES and TVIA submitted as part of the application]



Figure 7.7 Emerging context as part of Station Hill Phase 3, seen from Queen Victoria Street and Station Road junction [taken from ES and TVIA submitted as part of the application]



Figure 7.8 Emerging context as part of Station Hill Phase 3, seen from Friar Street, looking east [taken from ES and TVIA submitted as part of the application]



Figure 7.9 Emerging context as part of Bristol & West Arcade and 173-175 Friar Street [taken from DAS submitted as part of the application]



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Key view points

- 6.63 Given the scale and height of the proposal, the townscape assessment includes close range views from within the setting of listed buildings, conservation area or key vistas that allow better understanding of the impact of the proposed massing.
- 6.64 The following key views have been selected and described in the next pages (highlighted in yellow in Fig 7.9):
- 1 View looking west from junction at Station Road and Queen Victoria Street; and
 - 2 View looking east from No 40 Friar Street.
- 6.65 Other CGI images have been created from the street frontage to demonstrate the townscape impact of the proposal. However, given the narrow width of the street, these view would never be realistic (highlighted in white on Fig 7.9).



Figure 7.10 Key viewpoints



Figure 7.11 View looking west from junction at Station Road and Queen Victoria Street

View looking west from junction at Station Road and Queen Victoria Street

- 6.66 The view looking west, from the Station Road is dominated by the listed buildings at Queen Victoria Street and 147 Friar Street, with its recently approved roof extension. In comparison to consented scheme, the proposal sits comfortably with the datum of the buildings along the street. The limited but pronounced contrast in brick colour appears congruous with the animated Victorian detailing of surrounding buildings.

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Figure 7.12 View looking west from junction at Station Road and Queen Victoria Street

View looking east from No 40 Friar Street

6.67 The revised massing of the proposal sits comfortably with the street frontage. The use of darker colour for the roof and the slight angle gives the 'top' a distinct finish in context of the more traditionally pitched roofs. The materiality and verticality of the elevation appear contextual with the wide area.

Assessment of Townscape Impact

- 6.68 The proposals consist of a six storey building. Compared to the consented scheme, the revised massing much more comfortably with the context of the Site.
- 6.69 Whilst the scale of the building appears to have a 'bigger floor plate' than the comparatively finer grained buildings, the elevation treatment breaks the building to incorporate a similar rhythm as established within the street frontage. The use of brick on the frontage and darker aluminium roof distinguishes the 'top' level with the main facade.
- 6.70 At the ground floor, the shop frontage detail is continued at the same height as the street. The slightly higher ground floor along with the frontage makes the proposed building appear unified with the wider street frontage.
- 6.71 In terms of its architectural appearance, the building frontage is proposed in red brick to reflect the materiality of the existing buildings found elsewhere on Friar Street. Panels of brick detailing are also included to the red brick part of the building to add visual interest. A contrasting brick colour is used to highlight the central bay and the entrance, creating a focal point.
- 6.72 Overall, the proposal would result in the following townscape enhancements:
- The redevelopment of buildings that make limited contribution to the street scene and vitality of area; creating a more viable form of development that would ensure occupation;
 - Addition of new buildings of appropriate scale and high quality architectural style and materials, relating to their sensitive heritage contexts;
 - Retention and restoration of the historic Bugle PH that would continue the narrative of Reading's pub history within the wider area;
 - A well designed and appropriate frontage on the south side of Friar Street opposite the obtrusive Novotel/Ibis; and,
 - The positive visual effect of the Proposed Development on the surrounding area through the quality of its design and materials and through the increased activity and illumination brought day and night.

Assessment Against Policy (Townscape)

- 6.73 Policy CC7 requires all development to be of "high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located." In addition, it states:
- Developments will also be assessed to ensure that they: -
- Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;
 - Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;
 - Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them, including providing suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily;
 - Are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping."
- 6.74 The proposed development takes cues from the established rhythm and proportions and continues them in a contemporary interpretation, while also recognising that there is room for individual architectural expression within this varied townscape. In doing so, it attempts to create a distinctive yet contextual building that add a new twenty-first century layer to the character of the area. As part of this process, the building seeks to ground itself within this wider townscape.
- 6.75 Having undergone a rigorous process of design iteration, in consultation with the Council Officers alongside the Design Review Panel and Conservation Area Advisory Committee, the proposal has positively responded to comments and concerns raised through engagement process. This has led to alterations to the flank and front elevation.
- 6.76 The lowered massing sustains the street presence of the Bugle, whilst providing a high quality redevelopment that would positively enhance the townscape.



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- 6.77 The proposal clearly respects the rhythm, scale and proportions of its neighbours, using vertical emphasis within the façades to break down the façade into a series of bays.
- 6.78 At six storeys, the height and massing of the proposed building would sit much more comfortably with the street frontage, compared with the consented scheme.
- 6.79 In any case, the proposal is not a divergence from the existing context which includes the 14 storey tall Ibis Hotel opposite. Additionally, the emerging context of the Station Hill proposals would also be seen in cumulative views, where the proposal would continue to appear harmonious to its more sensitive heritage context.
- 6.80 As such, the proposal complies with policies CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) and CR2 (Design in Central Reading) that seek development to be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area within which it is located.
- 6.81 It will also conform with relevant policies of the Section 12 of the NPPF: 'Achieving well-designed places', which "reinforces the importance of good design in achieving sustainable development, by ensuring the creation of inclusive and high quality places".

Section 7

Conclusion.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 This Heritage & Townscape Statement accompanies a planning application for the part demolition of existing buildings and the erection of a 6-storey building to provide co-living residential accommodation (purpose-built shared living accommodation – Sui Generis use class), together with the partial retention of the former Bugle Public House as a standalone Class E commercial unit at 138-144 Friar Street, Reading.
- 7.2 The proposed development presents a refined, highly contextual design that thoughtfully balances townscape intensification with the conservation of Reading's historic core. Arising as a revised scheme following the previous approval of a seven-storey hotel (Ref: PL/22/1235), the current application reassesses the Site's physical capacity and its relationship with adjacent heritage assets. In doing so, the design team has succeeded in creating a scheme that addresses modern housing demands while enhancing the character and distinctiveness of the local built environment.
- 7.3 From a townscape perspective, the reduction in overall massing from seven storeys down to six represents a substantial improvement over the extant permission. The revised scale sits comfortably within the established four-to-six-storey datum line characteristic of the south side of Friar Street.
- 7.4 Rather than presenting a monolithic front, the massing is carefully broken down into vertical bays that echo the fine-grained, historic plot divisions of the medieval town centre. Furthermore, the introduction of a set-back, darker mansard roof level visually softens the upper profile of the building, preventing it from appearing overbearing in both close-range street views and long-distance vistas.
- 7.5 The architectural expression of the proposal demonstrates a rigorous understanding of Reading's local vernacular and late-Victorian commercial heritage. The primary facade relies on red brickwork, interspersed with contrasting brick detailing and textured panels that introduce depth, shadow, and visual animation to the elevation. This approach avoids simple historicist pastiche, offering instead a contemporary interpretation of the town's decorative brick traditions.
- 7.6 Ground-floor active frontages maintain the established street datum line and retail continuity, ensuring that the development engages positively with the public realm and enhances pedestrian experience along Friar Street.
- 7.7 Central to the heritage strategy is the retention, restoration, and adaptive reuse of The Bugle Public House at No. 144 Friar Street. As a locally listed non-designated heritage asset, The Bugle holds social and historic value within the collective memory of the local community. The scheme secures the long-term viability of this asset by restoring its primary 19th-century fabric and early 20th-century frontage for use as an independent Class E commercial unit. By severing the pub's commercial reliance on its degraded upper floors and establishing it as an autonomous entity, the development successfully preserves its townscape presence and social narrative.
- 7.8 To facilitate the delivery of the co-living accommodation, the proposal includes the partial demolition of the rear extensions lining Fife Court. Extensive archival research and physical strip-out inspections revealed that these rear structures consist almost entirely of late-20th-century concrete and masonry rebuilds, retaining no legible historic floor plans or original internal fabric. Consequently, the loss of these modern, piecemeal additions results in a very low level of harm to the non-designated heritage asset. This minor impact is thoroughly documented and mitigated within this assessment, satisfying statutory requirements for historical recording.
- 7.9 In townscape terms, the replacement of these unkempt, piecemeal rear additions significantly enhances Fife Court itself. Historically one of the few surviving residential alleys off Friar Street, Fife Court has suffered from decades of neglect, blocked openings, and intrusive visual clutter. The proposed side elevation introduces a unified, single-storey brick plinth that references the scale of the original historic tenements while dramatically improving the safety, cleanliness, and visual appeal of the alleyway as viewed from the main thoroughfare.
- 7.10 Beyond the immediate Site boundaries, the proposal respects the broader setting of surrounding designated heritage assets. The adjusted height and set-back upper levels preserve crucial visual corridors along Friar Street, safeguarding open views toward the Grade I listed St. Laurence's Church and the Town Hall complex to the east. Additionally, the scheme maintains a complementary relationship with the Grade II listed commercial frontages at 147 Friar Street and 1–15 Queen Victoria Street, ensuring that the new insertion acts as a harmonious bridge between the historic core and emerging modern developments near Station Hill.
- 7.11 In summary, the revised scheme achieves full compliance with both National Planning Framework objectives and local development policies. By sustaining the significance of a locally listed asset, upgrading a neglected urban back-land, and delivering exemplary contemporary architecture, the development aligns directly with Paragraphs 210, 212, and 216 of the NPPF.
- 7.12 Furthermore, it fulfills the core requirements of Policies EN1, EN4, EN6, and CC7 of the Reading Local Plan by celebrating local distinctiveness and enhancing the public realm. The scheme delivers clear public, economic, and townscape benefits that decisively outweigh the minimal heritage harm identified, making a compelling case for planning approval.

Appendix A

References.

A. References

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Appendix B

List of Abbreviations.

B. List of Abbreviations

AVR	Accurate Visual Representation
CA	Conservation Area
CAA	Conservation Area Appraisal
CGI	Computer Generated Image
DAS	Design and Access Statement
GLA	Greater London Authority
GPA	Good Practice Advice
HE	Historic England
LP	London Plan (March 2021)
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PH	Public House
PLBCAA 1990	Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
PPG	Planning Practice Guidance



Appendix C

Legislative and Policy Framework.

C. Legislative and Policy Framework

Legislation		National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)	
C.1	The legal context for the management of listed buildings and conservation areas is contained within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (LBCAA).	C.7	The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (henceforth referred to as “the Framework”) was revised in response to the Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the Planning system consultation on 12 December 2024 and sets out the government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The Framework includes what the Court of Appeal has described as a “fasciculus” or bundle of paragraphs which lay down an approach which corresponds to the duty under section 66 of the LBCAA.
C.2	Primary legislation under Section 16 (2) and 66 (1) of the Act states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the Local Planning Authority or Secretary of State, as relevant, shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.	C.8	Section 12, ‘Achieving well-designed places’, reinforces the importance of good design in achieving sustainable development, by ensuring the creation of inclusive and high quality places.
C.3	Section 72(1) of the Act also states that: <i>‘In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any functions under or by virtue of any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.</i>	C.9	Section 16, ‘Conserving and enhancing the historic environment’, relates to the historic environment, and developments which may have an effect upon it. The framework encourages intelligent, imaginative and sustainable approaches to managing change. Historic England has defined this approach, which is reflected in the NPPF, as ‘constructive conservation’: defined as ‘a positive and collaborative approach to conservation that focuses on actively managing change...the aim is to recognise and reinforce the historic significance of places, while accommodating the changes necessary to ensure their continued use and enjoyment’ (Constructive Conservation in Practice, Historic England, 2009).
C.4	For the purposes of this statement, preservation equates to an absence of harm. Harm is defined in paragraph 84 of Historic England’s Conservation Principles as change which erodes the significance of a heritage asset	C.10	Heritage Assets are defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as: <i>‘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 heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).’ Listed buildings and Conservation Areas are both designated heritage assets.</i>
C.5	The case law concerning the duties in the Act is clarified further by the Judgment of Holgate J in Appendix 1 (paras 4-9) of the Save Stonehenge ¹ case.	C.11	‘Significance’ is defined as ‘The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site’s Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance.
C.6	The Barnwell judgement ² makes clear that “preserving” means “doing no harm” and that decision makers should give “considerable importance and weight” to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and the setting of listed buildings, and the character and appearance of conservation areas. A finding of harm to the setting of a listed building, or to the character or appearance of a conservation area gives rise to a strong statutory presumption against planning permission being granted.	C.12	The ‘Setting of a heritage asset’ is defined 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.’
		C.13	Paragraph 205 requires local authorities to maintain or have access to a historic environment record. This should contain up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area and be used to assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to their environment.
		C.14	Paragraph 207 states that, when determining applications, local planning authorities should require applicants to describe the significance of the heritage assets affected and any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail provided should be proportionate to the significance of the asset and sufficient to understand the impact of the proposal on this significance.
		C.15	According to Paragraph 208, local planning authorities are also obliged to identify and assess the significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal and should take this assessment into account when considering the impact upon the heritage asset.
		C.16	Paragraph 210 emphasises that local planning authorities should take account of: the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
		C.17	Paragraph 212 states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. It emphasises that the weight given to an asset’s conservation should be proportionate to its significance, and notes that this great weight should be given irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.
		C.18	Paragraph 213 states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.
		C.19	Paragraphs 214 and 215 address the balancing of harm against public benefits. If a balancing exercise is necessary (i.e. if there is any harm to the asset), considerable weight should be applied to the statutory duty where it arises. Proposals that would result in substantial harm or total loss of significance should be refused, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss (as per Paragraph 214).
		C.20	Paragraph 215 emphasises that where less than substantial harm will arise as a result of a proposed development, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of a proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.
		C.21	Paragraph 216 requires a balanced judgment for proposals that affect non-designated heritage assets, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
		C.22	Paragraph 220 notes that not all elements of Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites will contribute to their significance, but that, if harm to their significance is caused, decisions should follow the balancing exercise set out in paragraph 214 and 215, as appropriate.

1 R (Save Stonehenge World Heritage Site Ltd.) v. Secretary of State for Transport [2021] EWHC 2161 (Admin)
2 East Northamptonshire District Council, English Heritage and National Trust v SoS for Communities and Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Ltd. [2014] EWHC 137 (Admin)



C | Legislation and Policy Framework

Guidance and Advice

“Planning Practice Guidance (“PPG”) (July 2019)

- C.23
- The guidance on Conserving and enhancing the historic environment in the PPG supports the NPPF. Paragraph 002 states that conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change that requires a flexible and thoughtful approach, and that neglect and decay of heritage assets is best addressed through ensuring that they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation.
- C.24
- Paragraph 006 sets out how heritage significance can be understood in the planning context as archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic, defined as follows:
 - archaeological interest: As defined in the Glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework, there will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.
 - architectural and artistic interest: These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skill, like sculpture.
 - historic interest: An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.
- C.25
- The PPG emphasises in paragraph 007 the importance of assessing the nature, extent and importance of a heritage asset in understanding the potential impact and acceptability of development proposals.
- C.26
- It goes on to state that whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision-maker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the policy in the National Planning Policy Framework. In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest.
- C.27
- Harm may arise from works to the heritage asset or from development within its setting. A thorough assessment of the impact on setting needs to take into account, and be proportionate to, the significance of the heritage asset and the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance and the ability to appreciate it.

- C.28
- The PPG also provides clear guidance in paragraph 020 on the meaning of 'public benefits', particularly in relation to historic environment policy, including paragraphs 201 to 202 of the NPPF. The PPG makes clear that public benefits should be measured according to the delivery of the three key drivers of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental outcomes, all of which are reflected in the objectives of the planning system, as per Paragraph 8 of the NPPF. Public benefits include heritage benefits, and do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits, for example, works to a listed private dwelling which secure its future as a designated heritage asset could be a public benefit.
- C.29
- It sets out how the possibility of harm to a heritage asset can be assessed. The key points to note are:
 - What matters in assessing whether a proposal might cause harm is the impact on the significance of the heritage asset which derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting;
 - Within each category of harm (which category applies should be explicitly identified), the extent of the harm may vary and should be clearly articulated;
 - It is the degree of harm to the asset's significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed. The harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting;
 - in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest.

National Design Guide (NDG)

- C.30
- Both the Framework and NPPG contain detailed guidance on why design is important and how good design can be achieved. Good design is inherently informed by its surroundings which is recognised in the National Design Guide.
- C.31
- It includes 10 characteristics for creating beautiful, successful and enduring places, specifically demonstration of understanding of local and wider context; and valuing existing heritage and culture, which helps to achieve built form that is appropriate. This underpins the Historic England/CABE Building in Context (BiC) (2001) advice and subsequent Toolkit which provided 8 principles to support successful new development in historic contexts. The relationship between the BiC principles and the Model Design Guide characteristics are explained on the HE website.

GPA 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment [March 2015]

- C.32
- This guidance provides guidance on Managing Significance in Decision Taking in the Historic Environment. It provides information to assist local authorities and other interested parties on implementing historic environment policy in the Framework and NPPG.
- C.33
- The general advice is that development proposals affecting the historic environment are much more likely to gain necessary permissions if they are designed with the knowledge and understanding of the significance of the heritage assets they may affect. The first step for all applicants is to understand the significance of any affected heritage asset and, if relevant, the contribution of its setting to its significance. Understanding the nature of that significance is important to understanding the need for and best means of conservation where conservation (for heritage policy) is defined as “the process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.” (NPPF Glossary Annex 2 page 66)
- C.34
- For the historic environment, factors that will make the scale, height, massing, alignment, materials and proposed use of new development successful in its context are (page15 paragraph 53):
 - the history of the place;
 - the significance of nearby assets and the contribution of their setting, recognising this as a dynamic concept;
 - the general character and distinctiveness of an area in its widest sense;
 - landmarks and other built or landscape features which are key to a sense of place;
 - views into, through and from the site and its surroundings;
 - and the current and historic uses in the area and the urban grain.
- C.35
- In assessing the impact of a development proposal on the significance of a heritage asset the document emphasises that the cumulative impact of incremental small-scale changes may have as great an effect on the significance of a heritage asset as a larger scale change. Crucially, the nature and importance of the significance that is affected will dictate the proportionate response to assessing that change, its justification, mitigation and any recording which may be necessary.



C | Legislation and Policy Framework

GPA 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2nd Edition) [December 2017]

- 7.13 This provides guidance on the Setting of Heritage Assets. Since harm can arise from loss of fabric but also from development within the setting of heritage assets, Historic England has provided advice on how to manage change within the setting of heritage assets. Although it does not seek to prescribe a single methodology or particular data sources but it is clear that alternative approaches will only be acceptable if they are demonstrably compliant with legislation, national policies and objectives.
- C.36 It suggests that, at the pre-application or scoping stage, the local authority, having due regard to the need for proportionality:
- indicates whether it considers a proposed development has the potential to affect the setting of (a) particular heritage asset(s), or
 - specifies an 'area of search' around the proposed development within which it is reasonable to consider setting effects, or
 - advises the applicant to consider approaches such as a 'Zone of Visual Influence' or 'Zone of Theoretical Visibility' in relation to the proposed development in order to better identify heritage assets and settings that may be affected.
- C.37 Particularly for developments that are not likely to be prominent or intrusive, the assessment of effects on setting may often be limited to the immediate surroundings, while taking account of the possibility that setting may change as a result of the removal of impermanent landscape or townscape features, such as hoardings or planting.
- 7.14 The suggested framework is a 5-step process:
- 1 Identify the heritage assets which might be affected, and their settings.
 - 2 Assess the significance of the heritage assets identified and assess the contribution which their settings make to their overall significance (including the specific contribution of the Site to this significance);
 - 3 Assess the effects of the proposed development on this significance through generating change within the settings of these heritage assets, in visual, experiential and interpretative terms.
 - 4 An overview of ways to maximise enhancement and minimise harm have been undertaken within the illustrative scheme, as an indicative approach to addressing heritage issues arising from the scheme.
 - 5 Step 5 requires the making, documenting and monitoring of decision-making outcomes (This is not part of this Statement's scope of works).

- C.38 It recommends that the assessment should first address the key attributes (or values) of the heritage asset and then consider 4 key issues. These are:
- The physical surroundings of the asset including its relationship with other heritage assets;
 - The asset's intangible associations with its surroundings, and patterns of use;
 - The contribution made by noises, smells, etc to significance; and
 - The way views allow the significance of the asset to be appreciated
- C.39 The setting of a heritage asset is defined in the NPPF³ and the contribution made by setting to the significance of a heritage asset can be physical, perceptual and associational⁴. In assessing whether, how and to what degree setting makes a contribution to the significance of a heritage asset, the starting point is an understanding of the asset itself.
- C.40 Consideration of potential attributes of the physical surroundings and how the asset is experienced are in the checklist provided at page 11 of the document and includes aspects such as topography, materials, scale and grain of surrounding streetscape, formal design hierarchy etc.
- C.41 How the asset is experienced within its surroundings can be derived from townscape character and views to and from the asset. Aspects such as intentional inter-visibility and visual dominance are importance in understanding the asset's significance.
- C.42 However, the GPA 3 makes an important distinction between setting and views. Whilst acknowledging that the extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations, and that they play an important part in the way an asset is experienced, other environmental factors and intangible associations factors also have to be considered.
- C.43 It is recognised that the setting of a heritage asset will change over time but where the setting of a heritage asset has been compromised in the past by unsympathetic development, to accord with NPPF policies consideration needs to be given to whether additional change will further detract from, or can enhance, the significance of the asset. Negative change could include severing the last link between an asset and its original setting; positive change could include the restoration of a building's designed landscape or the removal of structures impairing views of a building.

3 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. (NPPF Revised 2023, Annex 2: Glossary p71)

4 The Setting of Heritage Assets Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning #3 Historic England 2nd Edn December 2017

- C.44 In order to analyse the effects of the proposed development, GPA 3 provides another checklist on page 13 of the document. It advises that the assessment should address the attributes of the proposed development in terms of its:
- location and siting
 - form and appearance
 - wider effects
 - permanence
- C.45 At the proposal stage, ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm should be considered. Enhancement (see NPPF, paragraph 137) may be achieved by actions including:
- removing or re-modelling an intrusive building or feature;
 - replacement of a detrimental feature by a new and more harmonious one;
 - restoring or revealing a lost historic feature or view;
 - introducing a wholly new feature that adds to the public appreciation of the asset;
 - introducing new views (including glimpses or better framed views) that add to the public experience of the asset, or;
 - improving public access to, or interpretation of, the asset including its setting.
- C.46 The guidance also acknowledges that the design of a development may not be capable of sufficient adjustment to avoid or significantly reduce the harm, for example where impacts are caused by fundamental issues such as the proximity, location, scale, prominence or noisiness of a development.
- C.47 Where attributes of a development affecting setting may cause some harm to significance and cannot be adjusted, screening may have a part to play in reducing harm. As screening can only mitigate negative impacts, rather than removing impacts or providing enhancement, it ought never to be regarded as a substitute for well-designed developments within the setting of heritage assets.



C | Legislation and Policy Framework

Local Plan- Adopted November 2019 (Draft Partial Update May 2025)

Built Heritage

- 7.15
- The main element of local planning policy is the Local Plan (adopted November 2019) which contains the main planning policies for Reading up to 2036. The following policies are relevant to the proposals:
- 7.16
- Policy EN1 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment notes that historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced.
- 7.17
- Policy EN4 states that “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.”
- 7.18
- The Policy notes that harm to or loss of a locally important heritage asset would be permitted only where it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the development significantly outweigh the asset’s significance. It also states that where loss is acceptable, recording of the heritage asset should be undertaken. Additionally, replacement buildings are required to 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.
- 7.19
- Policy EN6 New Development in a Historic Context notes that in areas characterised by heritage assets, the historic environment will inform and shape new development. New development will make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development. When determining planning applications for new development, the following factors will be taken into consideration:
- The positive contribution of the development to the existing historic townscape (scale, height, mass, proportion, plot size, street form, materials, significant vistas and views, and open space);
 - Sensitivity to historic context;
 - Reflection of borough-wide major heritage themes that contribute to local distinctiveness (e.g. patterned brickwork or former worker terraced housing); and,
 - Whether development promotes and/or improves access to previously undiscovered or neglected historic significance.

Design and the Public Realm

7.20 Policy CC7 states that

All development must be of high-quality design, employing characteristics to create, maintain and enhance physical character, nurture and sustain a sense of safety and community and positively address environmental issues affecting the climate. Proposals will be assessed to ensure that the development makes a positive contribution within the following characteristics:

- Context – enhances the surroundings based on a sound understanding of the features of the site and its surroundings and is responsive to local history, culture and heritage.
- Identity – is attractive and distinctive, with a positive and coherent identity that suits the context, its history, how we live today and how we are likely to live in the future. Proposals should be visually attractive to occupants and other users with a strong focus on high-quality architecture.
- Built Form – exhibits a coherent pattern of development that is compact and walkable, accessible by public transport, services and facilities with distinctive and legible streets and other spaces that are easy to navigate, safe and accessible. Development should employ appropriate scale, architectural detail and materials. Streets should be tree-lined and provide high-quality public realm.
- Movement – is accessible and easy to move around for all and especially vulnerable users, taking account of the diverse needs of its users and providing a genuine choice of sustainable transport modes. Development should promote activity and social interaction.
- Nature – enhances and optimises nature by integrating existing and new natural features into a multifunctional network to support quality of place, biodiversity, water management and climate change mitigation. Schemes should retain existing trees and aim to establish new trees.
- Public spaces – creates safe, secure, social and inclusive public spaces and streets.
- Uses – ensures uses are mixed and integrated, including a range of local services and facilities to support daily life and a mix of housing and tenure types.

- 7.21
- Recognising Reading’s historic environment, the local plan promotes development within the Borough to be of highest quality design that is sensitive to, and contributes to enhancing, the character of the area in which it is located.



Appendix D

Statutory List Descriptions.

D. Statutory List Descriptions

147 Friar Street

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1113488

Date first listed: 14-Dec-1978

Statutory Address 1: 147, FRIAR STREET

District: Reading (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

National Grid Reference: SU7149673571

Details

1. 5128 SU 7173 12/492

FRIAR STREET (South Side) No 147

2. Circa 1880s. 3½ storey commercial frontage. Painted brick with stone voussoirs and dressings. Cornice and parapet. 3 high segmental headed dormers with ramped moulded coping between and modillion cornices, centre 2-light. These and 3 pairs of windows on 2nd floor are plate glass sashes. 4 depressed arches on 1st floor under cornice and fascia with outer pilasters and dividing fluted columns with Corinthian caps. Cornice and fascia over ground floor shop front of similar pattern with recessed entrance. The 2 storey shop front is the main interest of this building and it is included for that reason.

1-31 Queen Victoria Street

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1113564

Date first listed: 14-Dec-1978

Date of most recent amendment: 01-Aug-1979

Statutory Address 1: 1-31, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET

Statutory Address 2: 148,149 AND 150, FRIAR STREET

Statutory Address 3: 2-32, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET

Statutory Address 4: 24-28, BROAD STREET

Statutory Address 5: 35-38, BROAD STREET

District: Reading (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

National Grid Reference: SU7152373529

Details

In the entry for BROAD STREET (north side)

1/558 Nos 24 to 28 (consec) Nos 35 to 37 (consec) the numbering shall be amended to read Nos 24, 26, and 28 and Nos 35, 36 and 37

FRIAR STREET (South Side) 2/558 Nos 148 and 149

The numbering shall be amended to read Nos 148, 149 and 150

QUEEN VICTORIA STREET 1. 5128 Nos 1 to 31 (odd) Nos 2 to 32 (even) SU 7173 NE 1/558 SU 7173 SW 2/558 SU 7173 SE 3/558 SU 7173 12/558 II

2. Including Nos 148 and 149 Friar Street and Nos 24 to 28 and 35 to 37 (consec) Broad Street. A circa 1894 commercial street with returns to Broad and Friar Streets. Probably by Joseph Morris. Dutch gabled free Baroque style. 3 1/2 storeys, yellow brick and terracotta with dividing Ionic pilasters. Dentil cornice. Pilasters to dormers, broken pediments above. An elongated pattern of shallow bays to 1st and 2nd floors 4:2:1:1:1:3. Mullion and transom window to bays, sashes with architraves (and pediments on 1st floor) to rest. Modern shopfronts, retaining cornice to fascia and scroll brackets to pilasters, only one shop retains prewar shopfront. Large returns to Broad Street. The return to east (No 28 Broad Street) supported by No 26 (dated 1894, grey brick with red terracotta dressings) and by No 24 (an early C20 Bank with -large shaped pediment doorway on corner to Cross Street; red brick with stone dressings and stone fret patterns to gables).



