

**COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 1**

Councillor Josh Williams to ask the Chair of the Planning Applications Committee:

**Heritage Assets**

Reading's Local Plan says, 'The Council will monitor buildings and other heritage assets at risk through neglect, decay or other threats, proactively seeking solutions for assets at risk ... and, as a last resort, using its statutory powers.' Can the Chair please tell us which at risk buildings the Council is currently monitoring, and what proactive solutions it is seeking for those buildings? Can the Chair also tell us what are, in the last resort, the Council's statutory powers?

**REPLY** by the Chair of the Planning Applications Committee (Councillor Lovelock):

I thank Cllr Williams for his question.

Reading Borough Council currently has two buildings on Historic England's 'heritage at risk register', and one Conservation Area.

The buildings are: (1) a small part of the Abbey Ruins (arch) and (2) Chazey Farm Tithe Barn.

We are expecting that the Abbey Ruins should be able to come off the list with all elements having been restored.

Monitoring of Chazey Farm Barn has taken place since the work to protect the structure was carried out last year after a warning notice was served on the relevant parties.

The Conservation Area at risk is the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road area. We have recently adopted a reappraisal and enlargement of this area and initiatives are currently being looked at through the High Street Heritage Action Zone programme with support from Historic England to remove the area from being at risk.

In terms of other privately-owned buildings at risk, using the resources that we have, discussions between Council Officers and the agents for the owners and internal inspection by officers would be carried out. If urgent works are needed to weatherproof and protect the building, using powers provided by section 54 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, a schedule of works required for the urgent preservation of the building is drawn up and sent to all parties with an interest in the building putting them on notice to carry out these works. This is an Urgent Works Notice. If no action is taken, section 55 of the same Act allows the Council to undertake the works and to then recover the costs from the interested parties.

Other options include:

1. listed building enforcement notices under s38 and prosecution for any failure to comply under s43; and
2. s215 (untidy site) notices;
3. Compulsory Purchase Order for a listed building in need of urgent works.