

## COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021

Ward: Abbey

Address: Attwells Drinking Fountain, Thames Side Promenade, Reading

Proposal: To add Attwells Drinking Fountain to the List of Locally-Important Buildings and Structures

### RECOMMENDATION

That Attwells Drinking Fountain be added to the List of Locally-Important Buildings and Structures.

## 1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

1.1 To report on a proposal to add Attwells Drinking Fountain to the List of Locally-Important Buildings and Structures.

1.2 Appendices:

Appendix 1: Location map

Appendix 2: Relevant photos and images

Appendix 3: Proposed Local List text

Appendix 4: Nomination form

## 2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Reading Borough Council maintains a List of Locally-Important Buildings and Structures ('the Local List'). Its purpose is to recognise the buildings and structures which do not meet the criteria for national listing, but are nonetheless significant to the heritage of the local area. It was agreed by Planning Applications Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 that decisions on additions to the Local List should be made at PAC.

2.2 A nomination was received on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020 to add Attwells Drinking Fountain, Thames Side Promenade to the Local List. Consultations have been carried out in accordance with the agreed process, and this report sets out the recommended action.

2.3 The nominated heritage item is a late Victorian drinking fountain, sited alongside the River Thames just west of the Caversham Bridge.

2.4 The nomination form received for the building identifies the significance of the building as follows:

*Historic Interest*

*Historical Association*

*Frank Attwells was a local businessman who founded a musical instrument manufacturers and piano dealers in 1866 and in 1887 took over the Royal County Theatre, both on Friar Street.*

*He died in August 1892 while Mayor of Reading. His wife Georgina provided money in her will for a fountain to be erected in his memory. The inscription says:*

*THIS DRINKING FOUNTAIN  
WAS ERECTED AS PROVIDED  
BY THE WILL OF  
MRS SARAH GEORGINA ATTWELLS  
IN MEMORY OF  
FRANK ATTWELLS  
WHO WAS MAYOR OF READING 1891-2  
AND WHO DIED DURING  
HIS YEAR OF OFFICE  
ON AUGUST 25TH 1892  
AND ALSO  
IN MEMORY OF HIS WIDOW  
SARAH GEORGINA ATTWELLS  
WHO DIED ON APRIL 2ND 1905*

*The unveiling in 1908 was attended by local dignitaries and representatives of Caversham District Council.*

*“Alderman Martin said “Its position was a convenient one, and there was something appropriate in placing the memorial in the vicinity of the River Thames, as the late Frank Attwells took a great interest in aquatic sports, being a good swimmer and fond of water polo.”*

#### *Social Importance*

*The siting was at the end of the tram and trolleybus route that once ran from the top of Whitley Street to the Thames Promenade, a popular recreational destination. Memorial fountains are an important part of Victorian social history. This may be the only extant example in Reading of a memorial fountain to an individual.*

#### *Architectural Interest*

#### *Innovation and Virtuosity*

*The design shows elements of Indo-Saracenic architecture as the style is similar to a chattri. Similar influences appear in the bell tower on top of E P Collier school (Swansea Road Board School).*

*The architects were Charles Smith and son of Friar Street. They were prominent local architects associated with many public works such as additions to the Oxford Road workhouse 1889-91, Park Hospital in Reading 1904/6, and similar in the wider area. Others involved were contractors Collier and Catley, the stone mason was Mr A F Jones and the carving was by Messrs Hayden and Batting.*

*The materials are Portland stone with a base of Aberdeen granite. There were two drinking fountains (of which some pipework and part of a chain remain) and at the base, two troughs for animals.*

#### *Townscape Value*

*Although slightly removed from its original position the fountain is a focal point approaching the Thames Promenade from Richfield Avenue or walking along the promenade.*

### **3. RESULTS OF CONSULTATION**

3.1 The following were consulted on the proposed addition to the Local List:

- Reading Borough Council, Parks (landowner);
- Ward councillors;
- Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee;
- Reading Civic Society; and
- Caversham and District Residents' Association (CADRA) and Bell Tower Community Association (local community groups).

3.2 Responses were received from RBC Parks, Reading Civic Society and CADRA.

#### **3.3 RBC Parks**

*The drinking fountain is a notable feature with a historic link to the area it is now located positively contributing to a sense of place. Within a much changed surrounding the fountain provides a focal point of interest, a local listing appears appropriate.*

#### **3.4 Reading Civic Society**

*The committee of Reading Civic Society has reviewed, and supports Attwells Drinking Fountain being added to the Local List. On Page 6 the 2nd block of supporting information . I suggest it needs to be “ .. produced by Arts Asia in 2019.” (you have it as arts asia)*

#### **3.5 CADRA**

*The fountain represents an important piece of history in commemorating the life of Frank Attwells, Mayor of Reading. It is notable that, although Mr Attwells was a Reading man, the ceremony was attended by the members of the Caversham Urban District Council in the period before the boundary change in 1911 when Caversham became part of Reading. The fountain continues to be held in great affection by local people. It forms an important focal point across from St Peters Conservation Area and both the design and inscription are of considerable interest and historical significance.*

*We ask the Planning Applications Committee to approve the request for Local Listing.*

- 3.6 Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee made the initial nomination and therefore did not make any comment on the proposal for local listing.

#### **4. ASSESSMENT**

- 4.0.1 The proposal to add a building or structure to the Local List should be considered against the criteria in Appendix 2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019).

#### **4.1 Exclusions**

- 4.1.1 The Local Plan specifies that a building should not be considered for the Local List where it is already part of a conservation area, scheduled monument or subject to an Article 4 direction relating to historic or architectural interest. Attwells Drinking Fountain is not within any of these existing designations and can therefore be considered against the other criteria.

#### **4.2 General principles**

- 4.2.1 Attwells Drinking Fountain dates from 1908 and therefore needs to be considered against the following general principle:

*b. 1840 - 1913: Any building, structure or group of buildings that is/are of clearly-defined significance in the local context and where elements that contribute to its/ their heritage significance remain substantially complete.*

- 4.2.2 Although not in its original location, the drinking fountain has been re-erected close to that site. It remains substantially complete and unaltered and is of definite significance.

#### **4.3 Significance**

- 4.3.1 To be added to the Local List, a building or structure must fulfil at least one of the defined significance criteria, which fall into two categories - historic interest and architectural interest. These are assessed below.

##### *Historic Interest*

##### *a. Historical Association*

*i. The building or structure has a well authenticated historical association with a notable person(s) or event.*

*ii. The building or structure has a prolonged and direct association with figures or events of local interest.*

- 4.3.2 The memorial drinking fountain has a strong historical association with a notable person and figure of local interest, as it was a dedication to Frank Attwells, a former Reading mayor and local businessman, who died in 1892 whilst still in office as mayor. He founded a musical instrument manufacturer and piano dealers in Friar Street in 1866. In 1887 he took over the Royal County Theatre, also on Friar Street. After his death, his widow Georgina left money in her will for a memorial fountain. The fountain was unveiled in 1908, and the unveiling was attended by local dignitaries from both Reading and Caversham (then a separate urban district).

*b. Social Importance*

*The building or structure has played an influential role in the development of an area or the life of one of Reading's communities. Such buildings/structures may include places of worship, schools, community buildings, places of employment, public houses and memorials which formed a focal point or played a key social role.*

- 4.3.3 Although the memorial was located at the end of a tram route and does form something of a focal point, it is not clear that the memorial was sufficiently influential to qualify under this criterion.

*c. Industrial Importance*

*The building or structure clearly relates to traditional or historic industrial processes or important businesses or the products of such industrial processes or businesses in the history of Reading or are intact industrial structures, for example bridges.*

- 4.3.4 It is not considered that Attwells Drinking Fountain fulfils this criterion.

*Architectural Interest*

*a. Sense of place*

*i. The building or structure is representative of a style that is characteristic of Reading.*

- 4.3.5 It is not considered that Attwells Drinking Fountain fulfils this criterion.

*b. Innovation and virtuosity*

*i. The building or structure has a noteworthy quality of workmanship and materials.*

*ii. The building or structure is the work of a notable local/national architect/engineer/builder.*

*iii. The building or structure shows innovation in materials, technique, architectural style or engineering.*

- 4.3.6 In terms of b.i., the fountain is constructed with Portland stone on a base of Aberdeen granite.

- 4.3.7 In terms of b.ii., a number of notable local individuals and businesses were involved in the design and construction of the fountain. The architects, Charles Smith and Son, were based in Reading, and were involved in a number of other public works in the town in the same period such as the Oxford Road Workhouse and the Park Hospital, as well as listed buildings within the Reading School site. Collier and Catley, who were contracted for the works, is a notable local construction company also responsible for constructing other features such as the war memorial at the entrance to Forbury Gardens. The stonemason was AF Jones, whose company exists in Reading to this day. The carving was by Messrs Hayden and Batting.

- 4.3.8 In terms of innovation and virtuosity (b.iii.), the fountain shows elements of the indo-saracenic architectural style primarily in use in India at the time, and has

similarities to an Indian chattri. A similar style is used for the bell tower at EP Collier Primary School.

*c. Group value*

*i. The buildings/structures form a group which as a whole has a unified architectural or historic value to the local area.*

*ii. The buildings/structures are an example of deliberate town planning from before 1947.*

4.3.7 It is not considered that Attwells Drinking Fountain fulfils this criterion.

#### **4.4 Conclusion of assessment**

4.4.1 Attwells Drinking Fountain qualifies for addition to the Local List because it:

- Is not within a conservation area, scheduled monument or area subject to an Article 4 direction relating to historic or architectural interest;
- Dates from between 1840 and 1913 and is of clearly-defined significance in the local context and elements that contribute to its heritage significance remain substantially complete;
- Contributes to the heritage of the Borough in terms of its historical association; and
- Contributes to the heritage of the Borough in terms of its innovation and virtuosity.

4.4.2 A description of the significance of the building for inclusion in the Local List is included in Appendix 3.

## **6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Local listing of buildings and structures, where it leads to the retention of those buildings or structures, can help to address the climate emergency by negating the need for demolition and new development, which are processes that use significant amounts of energy and result in emissions.

## **7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 It is not expected that there will be any significant adverse impacts on specific groups due to race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age or religious belief as a result of the recommendations of this report.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 Addition to the Local List is not a statutory process, and there are no legal implications of the recommendations of this report.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

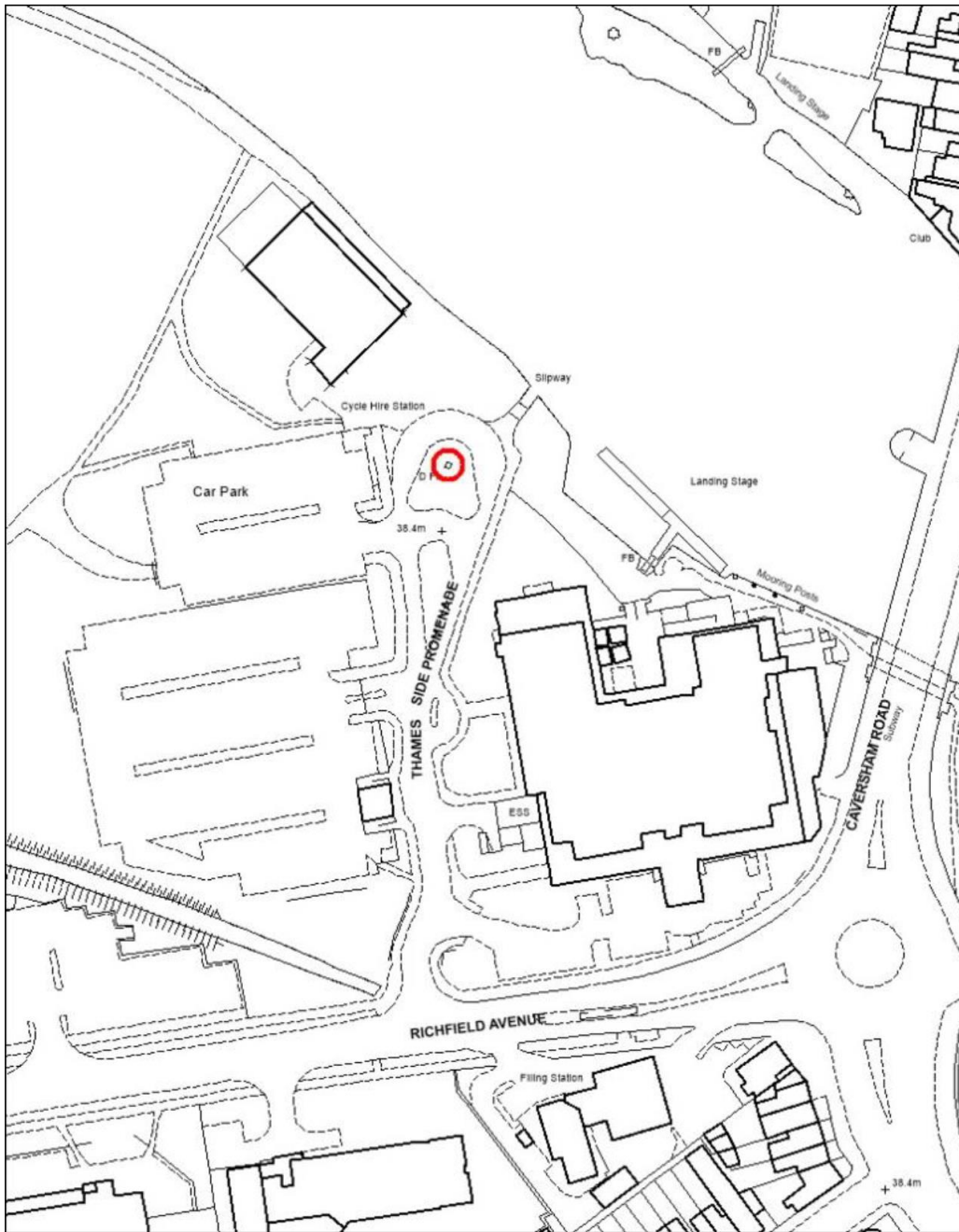
9.1 Consideration of this nomination and any resulting amendments to the Local List will be accommodated within existing budgets.

**10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

10.1 Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 2019)

**Bruce Edgar, Conservation and Urban Design Officer**

# APPENDIX 1: LOCATION PLAN





## APPENDIX 2: RELEVANT PHOTOGRAPHS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

(Photos by Reading CAAC)

**Photo 1:**

**Attwells Drinking Fountain**



**Photo 2:**

**Top of Attwells Drinking Fountain**



### **APPENDIX 3: PROPOSED LOCAL LIST TEXT**

A memorial drinking fountain erected in 1908 in memory of Frank Attwells, a former Mayor of Reading, who died whilst in office in 1892. Frank Attwells founded a musical instrument manufacturer and piano dealers in Friar Street in 1866. In 1887 he took over the Royal County Theatre, also on Friar Street. His wife, Georgina, left money in her will for a memorial.

The fountain is constructed of Portland stone with a base of Aberdeen granite. The design shows elements of Indo-Sarcenic architecture. The fountain was designed by Charles Smith and Son of Reading, constructed by Collier and Catley, with stone masonry by Mr A F Jones and carving by Messrs Hayden and Batting.

The fountain has been moved slightly from its original position, but remains substantially unaltered. It makes an important contribution to the environment of the southern bank of the River Thames in this location.

## APPENDIX 4: NOMINATION FORM

Assessment form for locally listing buildings in Reading Borough November 2012

### CRITERIA AND CONSIDERATION FOR LOCALLY LISTING BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES IN READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Background and explanation:** Heritage assets cannot be replaced once lost. They include both nationally and locally listed buildings. Harm to an asset's significance can cause a loss of value to society and a loss of public benefit.

**The criteria for assessment of locally listing buildings/ structures** are set out below and are taken from the adopted Sites and Detailed Policies Document. These criteria and the accompanying explanation of how a particular building or structure meets these criteria will be used to assess whether that building or structure merits designation as a locally listed heritage asset.

The assessment will be based purely on the evidence provided with this form (unless the authority has access to further evidence).

**Identification of buildings or structures for local listing:** Buildings or structures worthy of being locally listed will mainly be identified through the process of considering and determining planning proposals and applications.<sup>1</sup>

#### Exclusions

Buildings and structures will not be considered for the Local List when they are already part of a Conservation Area<sup>2</sup>, Scheduled Monument, or subject to an article 4 direction relating to historical or architectural interest.

**Address of building/ structure:** Attwells' Drinking Fountain  
Thames Promenade  
Reading

**Postcode:** Closest probably the Crowne Plaza Hotel  
RG1 8BD

<sup>1</sup> Buildings or structures identified outside the application process will be considered as resources become available.

<sup>2</sup> Buildings that warrant local designation in a conservation area are awarded a 'Buildings of Townscape Merit' designation. For the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012), Buildings of Townscape Merit will be considered to warrant conservation and where appropriate enhancement in accordance with the NPPF.

**Selection for the Local List**

For any building, structure or group of buildings to be included in the Local List it **must** clearly meet the relevant age and integrity criteria:

	Please tick relevant box <sup>3</sup>
<b>(a)</b> pre-1840: Any building, structure or group of buildings where its/ their style, form and construction are easily identifiable.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>(b)</b> 1840 - 1913: Any building, structure or group of buildings that is/are substantially complete and unaltered and of definite significance.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>(c)</b> 1914 - 1939: Any building, structure or group of buildings that is/are substantially complete and unaltered and of a high level of significance.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>(d)</b> post 1939: Any building, structure or group of buildings that is/are of exceptional significance and wholly complete and unaffected by inappropriate changes.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please provide comments/ further explanation of above:

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Attwells' Drinking Fountain was unveiled in 1908. Originally it was placed closer to the main road and the Caversham Bridge Hotel (site of Crowne Plaza). It now sits on the Thames Promenade.

Memorial fountains are an important part of Victorian social history. This may be the only extant example in Reading of a memorial fountain to an individual. The Jubilee Fountain in St Mary's Butts, the dog fountain on the side of St Laurence's Church and St Anne's Well in Caversham are all nationally listed.

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<sup>3</sup> Note - if none of the above boxes are ticked, the building/ structure will not qualify for consideration as a locally listed building.

**In addition** it must also be shown that it contributes to the character of an area and is valued by local people in accordance with at least one of the criteria detailed below under the headings of historic interest, architectural interest and townscape value.

**Historic interest**

Please tick the relevant box/es

<p><b>(a) Historical Association</b> i. The building or structure has a well authenticated historical association with a notable person(s) or event.</p>	✓
<p>ii. The building or structure has a prolonged and direct association with figures or events of local interest.</p>	
<p><b>(b) Social Importance</b> The building or structure has played an influential role in the development of an area or the life of one of Reading's communities. Such buildings/structures may include places of worship, schools, community buildings, places of employment, public houses and memorials which formed a focal point or played a key social role.</p>	✓
<p><b>(c) Industrial Importance</b> The building or structure clearly relates to traditional or historic industrial processes or important businesses or the products of such industrial processes or businesses in the history of Reading or are intact industrial structures, for example bridges</p>	

*Comments/ further explanation of this should be provided in the box at the end of this section.*

**Architectural interest**

<p><b>(a) Sense of place</b> i. The building or structure is representative of a style that is characteristic of Reading.</p>	
<p><b>(b) Innovation and Virtuosity</b> i. The building or structure has a noteworthy quality of workmanship and materials.</p>	✓
<p>ii. The building or structure is the work of a notable local/national architect/engineer/builder.</p>	✓
<p>iii. The building or structure shows innovation in materials, technique, architectural style or engineering</p>	✓
<p><b>(c) Group Value</b> i. The buildings/structures form a group which as a whole has a unified architectural or historic value to the local area.</p>	

ii. The buildings/structures are an example of deliberate town planning from before 1947	
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*Comments/ further explanation of this should be provided in the box at the end of this section.*

***Townscape Value***

The buildings/structures have prominence and a landmark quality that is fundamental to the sense of place of a particular locality.	✓
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Please provide comments/ further explanation of above

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***Historic Interest***

**Historical Association**

Frank Attwells was a local businessman who founded a musical instrument manufacturers and piano dealers in 1866 and in 1887 took over the Royal County Theatre, both on Friar Street.

He died in August 1892 while Mayor of Reading. His wife Georgina provided money in her will for a fountain to be erected in his memory. The inscription says:

*THIS DRINKING FOUNTAIN  
WAS ERECTED AS PROVIDED  
BY THE WILL OF  
MRS SARAH GEORGINA ATTWELLS  
IN MEMORY OF  
FRANK ATTWELLS  
WHO WAS MAYOR OF READING 1891-2  
AND WHO DIED DURING  
HIS YEAR OF OFFICE  
ON AUGUST 25TH 1892  
AND ALSO  
IN MEMORY OF HIS WIDOW  
SARAH GEORGINA ATTWELLS  
WHO DIED ON APRIL 2ND 1905*

The unveiling in 1908 was attended by local dignitaries and representatives of Caversham District Council.

*“Alderman Martin said “Its position was a convenient one, and there was something appropriate in placing the memorial in the vicinity of the River Thames, as the late Frank Attwells took a great interest in aquatic sports, being a good swimmer and fond of water polo.”*

**Social Importance**

The siting was at the end of the tram and trolleybus route that once ran from the top of Whitley Street to the Thames Promenade, a popular recreational destination.

The drinking fountain provided free drinking water to visitors and dogs.

Memorial fountains are an important part of Victorian social history. This may be the only extant example in Reading of a memorial fountain to an individual.

***Architectural Interest***  
**Innovation and Virtuosity**

The design shows elements of Indo-Saracenic architecture as the style is similar to a chattri. Similar influences appear in the bell tower on top of E P Collier school (Swansea Road Board School).

The architects were Charles Smith and son of Friar Street. They were prominent local architects associated with many public works such as additions to the Oxford Road workhouse 1889-91, Park Hospital in Reading 1904/6, and similar in the wider area. Others involved were contractors Collier and Catley, the stone mason was Mr A F Jones and the carving was by Messrs Hayden and Batting.

The materials are Portland stone with a base of Aberdeen granite. There were two drinking fountains (of which some pipework and part of a chain remain) and at the base, two troughs for animals.

**Townscape Value**

Although slightly removed from its original position the fountain is a focal point approaching the Thames Promenade from Richfield Avenue or walking along the promenade.

**Recommendation made by (name of Proposer) : Evelyn Williams for Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee**

**Date : 22 May 2020**

General notes and any other relevant information on the building/ structure by Proposer<sup>4</sup> making recommendation for local listing including reasons for recommendation<sup>5</sup>



Source of all information and details of any supporting document used to support the recommendation to locally list the building or structure<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> The 'Proposer' is anticipated to normally be the Planning Case Officer given that the identification of most buildings or structures will currently be identified through the process of determining planning applications, however, the 'Proposer' could also be a member of the public or another organisation' group.

<sup>5</sup> Failure to meet the requirements for a building or structure to be locally listed at a particular point in time does not rule out future re-consideration of that building or structure if significant new evidence is produced.

<sup>6</sup> Any supporting documentation provided cannot be returned and will be kept on file as part of the supporting documentation should the building be locally listed. Please only send photocopies (subject to relevant copyright) should you wish to keep a copy of any documentation.



Detail of evidence/ document (including photographs)	Source/ reference of information
Unveiling of fountain in 1908	Berkshire Chronicle 17 October 1908 p11
Chattri and indo-saracenic architectural influences on E P Collier school	'In India's Image. Rediscovering Anglo-Indian Architecture in the South East of England. Booklet accompanying research and a series of exhibitions produced by arts asia in 2019. (partially reproduced at <a href="http://artsasia.org/MWbrochure.aspx">http://artsasia.org/MWbrochure.aspx</a> )
Works by Charles Smith and Son	'A biographical dictionary of Artists at Reading'. Sidney M Gold
Attwells Drinking Fountain	
Top of Attwells Drinking Fountain	

Continue on separate sheet if necessary



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**For official use only.**

Recommendation **confirmed/rejected** by Conservation Officer:

**Date:**

**Conservation Officer signature confirming recommendation:**

**Position:**

**Print name:**

**Reasons that the recommendation for locally listing the building/ structure have been confirmed/ rejected**

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**Any additional comments regarding the building/ structure**

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Building/ structure identification :

Grid reference:

UPRN:

Signature of Manager accepting recommendation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_