

## COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 2 March 2022

Ward: Abbey

Address: Huntley and Palmers Social Club, Gasworks Road, RG1 3EE.

Proposal: To add Huntley and Palmer's Social Club, Gasworks Road, Reading, to the List of Locally-Important Buildings and Structures

### RECOMMENDATION

That Huntley and Palmer's Social Club, Gasworks Road, Reading, 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 Huntley and Palmer's Social Club, Gasworks Road, 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 02 December 2020 that decisions on additions to the Local List should be made at PAC.

2.2 A nomination was received on 31 May 2020, to add the Huntley and Palmer's Social Club, Gasworks Road Reading, 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 nomination form received for the building identifies the significance of the building as follows:

*“The Huntley & Palmers building is a remnant of Huntley & Palmers factory that covered a vast site around the Kennet from the mid-nineteenth century until the second half of the twentieth century. This is the most significant remnant that remains.*

*In 1846 Huntley & Palmers purchased an old silk mill and embarked on a programme of additions and expansions. In 1873 new buildings north of the river and the original site were added.*

*Pevsner 2010 dates the building as c1900.*

*The Huntley & Palmer building was converted from offices for use as a recreation or social club in 1938.*

*It seems remarkable that the building was never listed but it deserves the protection of local listing. The area around it is changing rapidly with new, mainly high rise, developments now taking place on the former Homebase / Toys R Us site, along King’s Road and Queen’s Road/Watlington Street.”*

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

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

- The landowner (Stonewater Limited);
- Ward councillors;
- Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee;
- Reading Civic Society; and
- Kennet and Brunel Community Association and Newtown GLOBE (local community groups).

- 3.2 A response was received from the Reading Civic Society:

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

The committee of Reading Civic Society has reviewed, and support, Huntley and Palmers Social Club being added to the Local List.

Additional information provided by Terry Dixon

- I think it would be good to highlight that it was the workers canteen which in some sense was more important than being the social club.
- I think in H&P heyday, when 3 shifts were being worked (probably includes both WWs), it would have provided the preferably ‘Tea’ at break times, either directly or via the ‘Tea Trolley’ with home produced H&P biscuits & cakes!!

Additional information provided by Joe Doak (Doctoral Researcher in Urban History, Henley Business School & Vice Chair & Social Media Manager, Dorchester Civic Society):

- 1832 - land (plot 32) sold by Crown Estate to John Weedon (local surveyor 'orchestrating' much of the development of former Crown Estate in East Reading)
- 1832-35? - site leased/sold to William Cluett Isaac (tanner, originally from Dorset)
- 1861 - site purchased by H&P
- 1895 - buildings shown as 'coopers and case-makers' (on Goad Insurance Map)
- Circa 1902 (needs checking) - building converted/refurbished into offices
- 1929 - building shown as offices (on Goad Insurance Map)
- 1938 - building converted into 'Recreation Building'
- 1989 - ownership of Social Club transferred to RBC, submission of planning app to change use to 'local government purposes' (approved early 1990)
- 1993 - RBC resolves to dispose of former Social Club for social housing, subject to planning
- 1994 - public consultation on x5 options for former Social Club, with final decision made (12/09/94) to go for social housing scheme proposed by Raglan HA
- 1995 - Former Social Club refurbished into x12 social housing units

3.5 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. Huntley and Palmer Social Club, Gasworks Road, is not within any of these existing designations and can therefore be considered against the other criteria.

##### 4.2 General principles

4.2.1 The building appears to date from around 1900, and therefore needs to be considered against the following general principle:

*b. 1840 - 1913: Any building, structure or group of buildings that is/are substantially complete and unaltered and of definite significance.*

4.2.2 The original design has been a prominent feature in Reading next to the Kennet Canal for many years. Although the original windows have been replaced it is the polychrome brickwork which is its most significant feature, and this is clearly visible. Huntley & Palmers had in their civic role, being part of the wider community and their staff as part of Reading. The building was the social club and also housed the company cafeteria. It is a building that shows the Late Victoria style and character.

### 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 building is significant as a physical reminder of the facilities and civic planning associated with the adjacent Kennet, provided by Huntley & Palmers for its employees and the community of Reading.

- 4.3.3 Huntley & Palmers had a long association with Reading for more than 150 years, between 1822 and 1976. The town has long been known for the three B's (beer, bulbs and biscuits), and the 19<sup>th</sup> Century expansion of Huntley & Palmers was a significant contributor to the major industrial growth of Reading during this period which resulted in many of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century housing areas that remain to this day. As a result of Huntley & Palmers, the town was well known for its biscuits and this included the 'Biscuit Men' nickname attributed to Reading Football Club. As such, remaining features of the Huntley & Palmers site have a clear connection with figures and events of local interest.

- 4.3.4 The historical association remains clear through the retained signage on the façade.

##### *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.*

- 4.3.5 Although Huntley & Palmers itself has clear social importance, it is not considered that the building itself clearly fulfils 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.*

- 4.3.6 As set out in paragraph 4.3.3, the building was associated with the Huntley & Palmers biscuit manufacturers, one of the most important businesses in Reading's 19<sup>th</sup> Century expansion. It therefore clearly fulfils this criterion.

### Architectural Interest

#### a. Sense of place

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

4.3.7 The building is typical Reading red brick showing characteristic patterned brickwork features.

#### 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 The architect could have been local architect William Henry Woodman who is known to have worked on some of the factory buildings. He became borough surveyor in the mid 1850s. He has many significant Reading landmarks to his credit including the almshouses on Castle Street.

#### 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.*

4.3.9 The building has a clear group relationship with the Kings Road (formerly Huntley & Palmers) Gardens, on the other side of Kings Road, which were added to the Local List on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021. The Social Club was converted to a recreational building in 1938, a very similar time to the establishment of the garden, so there is likely to have been a strong relationship between the two. The gardens retain some continued reminders of the link, including H&P initials on the gates.

## 4.4 Conclusion of assessment

4.4.1 Huntley and Palmers Social Club 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 substantially complete and unaltered and of definite significance.;
- Contributes to the heritage of the Borough in terms of its historical association;
- Contributes to the heritage of the Borough in terms of its industrial importance;
- Contributes to the heritage of the Borough in terms of its sense of place;
- Contributes to the heritage of the Borough in terms of its innovation and virtuosity; and

- Contributes to the heritage of the Borough in terms of its group value.

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

## **5. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 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. The social club building has been repurposed for a variety of uses since its construction.

## **6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

6.1 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.

## **7. 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.

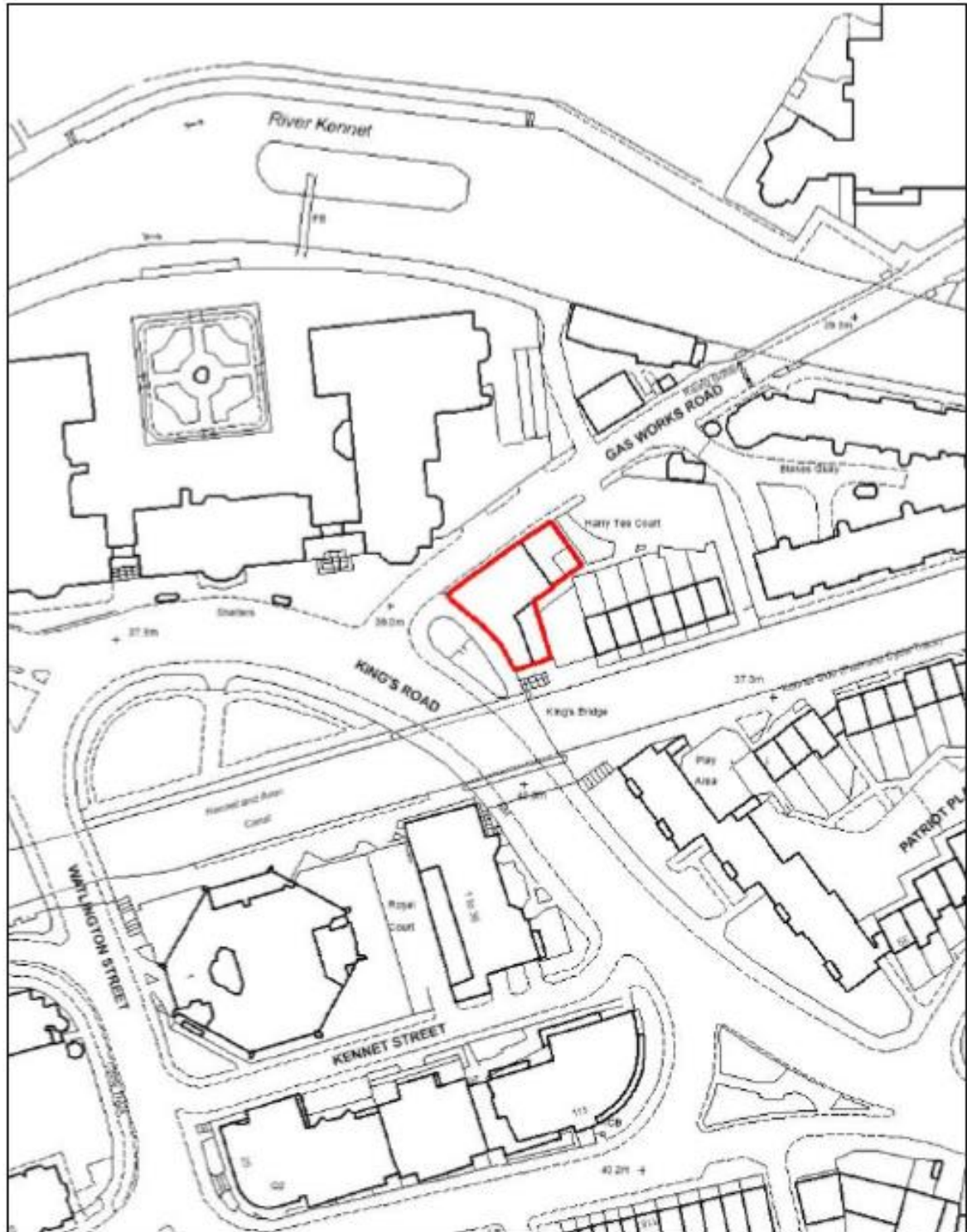
## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

9.1 Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 2019)

APPENDIX 1: LOCATION PLAN



**Huntley and Palmer's Social Club, Kings Road**

Nominated for inclusion on List

Scale 1: 1250



Working better with you

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LIST OF LOCALLY IMPORTANT BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES - NOMINATION

**APPENDIX 2 - PHOTOS**

Photo 1: (RBC - November 2021). Huntley and Palmer Social club in the centre behind the park, looking east along the Kennet Canal.





Photo 2: Huntley & Palmer Biscuit Factory, Social Club, has a long association with Reading. It is has now been converted to residential apartments. The façade has decorative polychrome brickwork from c.1900.



### APPENDIX 3: PROPOSED LOCAL LIST TEXT

The Huntley and Palmer Social Club is a survivor from the Huntley & Palmers factory that covered a vast site around the Kennet from the mid-nineteenth century until the second half of the twentieth century.

In 1846 Huntley & Palmers purchased an old silk mill and embarked on a programme of additions and expansions. In 1873 new buildings north of the river and the original site were added.

The building is typical Reading red brick with coloured brick details.

The architect could have been local architect William Henry Woodman who is known to have worked on some of the factory buildings. He became borough surveyor in the mid 1850s. He has many significant Reading landmarks to his credit including the almshouses on Castle Street.

When Huntley & Palmers left Reading a piece of land was given to Reading Borough Council for the benefit of residents that included that on which the former social club stands.

The future of the building resulted in at least two campaigns.

In March 1990 a group of artists took over the building a few weeks before RBC was due to begin using it as offices. The group wanted the council to give a commitment for the building to become an arts centre. An open day was held at 'Biscuit Base'. Press quotes in the Evening Post included John Punter of Reading Civic Society wished "every support for the public use of a historic building."

*'Don't let Huntley & Palmers become history'*. On 30 July 1994 at the factory garden (Huntley & Palmers memorial garden - also given to RBC) a picnic was held to protest against its demolition. A local campaign led by Edward Hancock raised a petition of over 2,000 signatures that was presented to the RBC planning committee. The committee agreed to save the building.

By 1998 the building had been converted to social housing and was officially opened on 20 April along with new houses along the canal. The properties are owned and managed by Stonewater Ltd (registered society 20558R), previously Raglan Housing Association.



**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>
(a) pre-1840: Any building, structure or group of buildings where its/ their style, form and construction are easily identifiable.	<input type="checkbox"/>
(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"/>
(c) 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"/>
(d) 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:

The Huntley & Palmers building is a remnant of Huntley & Palmers factory that covered a vast site around the Kennet from the mid-nineteenth century until the second half of the twentieth century. This is the most significant remnant that remains.

In 1846 Huntley & Palmers purchased an old silk mill and embarked on a programme of additions and expansions. In 1873 new buildings north of the river and the original site were added.

Pevsner 2010 dates the building as c1900.

The Huntley & Palmer building was converted from offices for use as a recreation or social club in 1938.

It seems remarkable that the building was never listed but it deserves the protection of local listing. The area around it is changing rapidly with new, mainly high rise, developments now taking place on the former Homebase / Toys R Us site, along King's Road and Queen's Road/Watlington Street.

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.

<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.

**Historic interest**

Please tick the relevant box/es

<b>(a) Historical Association</b> 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.	√
<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.	√
<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	√

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

**Architectural interest**

<b>(a) Sense of place</b> i. The building or structure is representative of a style that is characteristic of Reading.	√
<b>(b) Innovation and Virtuosity</b> 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	
<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.	√
ii. The buildings/structures are an example of deliberate town planning from before 1947	

*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.

√

Please provide comments/ further explanation of above

**Historic Interest**

a) Historical Association

A few points below but the importance and history of Huntley & Palmers biscuit enterprise and the Palmer family is well understood and the detail available elsewhere.

i) The building was part of the Huntley & Palmers biscuit factory. The Palmer family were influential in all aspects of Reading life: business, social and political. In addition the factory employed a significant proportion Reading people.

ii) The association with Reading life continues to this day although the factory closed in the 1970s.

b) Social importance

Many Reading residents worked at the factory. The social club was for a period the centre of many of the company's social activities.

c) Industrial importance

The building is the most significant physical remnant of the factory.

**Architectural Interest**

a) Sense of place

The building is typical Reading red brick with coloured brick details.

b)ii) Innovation and virtuosity

The architect could have been local architect William Henry Woodman who is known to have worked on some of the factory buildings. He became borough surveyor in the mid 1850s. He has many significant Reading landmarks to his credit including the almshouses on Castle Street.

c) Group value

The building has group value with the Huntley and Palmers garden (Kings Road garden).

**Townscape Value**

The building is on a major thoroughfare - King's Road - where it dominates the streetscape.

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

Date : 31 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>

When Huntley & Palmers left Reading a piece of land was given to Reading Borough Council for the benefit of residents that included that on which the former social club stands.

The future of the building resulted in at least two campaigns. In March 1990 a group of artists took over the building a few weeks before RBC was due to begin using it as offices. The group wanted the council to give a commitment for the building to become an arts centre. An open day was held at 'Biscuit Base'. Press quotes in the Evening Post included John Punter of Reading Civic Society wished "every support for the public use of a historic building."

'Don't let Huntley & Palmers become history'. On 30 July 1994 at the factory garden (Huntley & Palmers memorial garden - also given to RBC) a picnic was held to protest against its demolition. A local campaign led by Edward Hancock raised a petition of over 2,000 signatures that was presented to the RBC planning committee. The committee agreed to save the building.

By 1998 the building had been converted to social housing and was officially opened on 20 April along with new houses along the canal. The properties are owned and managed by Stonewater Ltd (registered society 20558R), previously Raglan Housing Association.

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>.

Detail of evidence/ document (including photographs)	Source/ reference of information
Dates for factory and social club.	Huntley and Palmers Collection (huntleyandpalmers.org.uk)
Date of social club	Pevsner Berkshire 2010. Geoffrey Tyzack et al.
Protests against proposed demolition of social club c1994	Reading Museum online collection Object No. REDMG : 2009.577.1
Architect	Sidney M Gold. A biographical dictionary of architects at Reading
Biscuit Base 1990	Evening Post 20 March 1990
Conversion to flats	Evening Post 20 April 1998

<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.

Huntley & Palmers  
social club (Evelyn  
Williams)



Huntley & Palmers  
social club chimney  
(Evelyn Williams)





Huntley & Palmers  
social club from the  
Huntley & Palmers  
garden (Evelyn  
Williams)



Huntley & Palmers -  
location of social club  
building from 1895  
Goad insurance map.  
(© British Library  
Board)



Online link to above

<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/firemaps/england/london/se/mapsu145ubu12u6uf013ru2.html?ga=2.230277786.748100602.1590918741-622086437.1589603974>

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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

Any additional comments regarding the building/ structure

Building/ structure identification:

Grid reference:

UPRN:

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

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

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

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