

Planning Applications Committee

06 December 2023



Reading
Borough Council
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Title	LOCAL LISTING REPORT - The Restoration Public House
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Burcu Can Cetin, Conservation Officer
Lead Councillor	Councillor Micky Leng, Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Ward	Kentwood
Address	928 Oxford Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6TJ
Recommendations	The Committee is asked: 1. To agree that the Restoration Public House be added to the List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. To report on a proposal to add the Restoration Public House to the List of Locally-Important Buildings and Structures. The report identifies the building as of local historical and architectural importance and makes an assessment based on the Council's published Local List criteria of entries to the list.

2. Policy context

- 2.1. The Council's new Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:
 - Healthy Environment
 - Thriving Communities
 - Inclusive Economy
- 2.2. These themes are underpinned by "Our Foundations" explaining the ways we work at the Council:
 - People first
 - Digital transformation
 - Building self-reliance
 - Getting the best value
 - Collaborating with others
- 2.3. Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the [Council's website](#). These priorities and the Corporate Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.
- 2.4. 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 2nd December 2020 that decisions on additions to the Local List should be made at PAC.

- 2.5. The criteria for considering additions to the Local List are set out in Appendix 2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019).

3. The proposal

- 3.1. A nomination was received on 9 August 2023 to add the Restoration Public House to the Local List. Consultations have been carried out in accordance with the agreed process, and this report sets out the recommended action.
- 3.2. The nominated heritage item is a two-storey brick-faced public house situated on the north of Oxford Road, as opposed to the 1920s suburban development of the Norcot Estate in Tilehurst, which it is historically associated with. Having an asymmetrical façade under a steeply pitched hipped roof with plain tiles and simple design chimneys, the building is dominated by the frontispiece with a semi-circular arch gable in the eaves and Tuscan order style mouldings at window and door surrounds on the ground floor. Overall, the pub's architecture shows the influence of Arts and Crafts and Neo-Georgian styles in its general design and classical references in detail.
- 3.3. The nomination form received for the building identifies the significance of the building as follows:
- 3.4. Principle for Selection for the Local List - (c) 1914 - 1939: any building, structure or group of buildings that is/are substantially complete and unaltered and of a high level of significance:

The (now closed) Restoration Public House was built in 1928. It was originally known as The Bell and changed its name in 1989. The public house and row of shops to the west serviced residential properties to the south that were built on the Norcot Estate following the First World War. The pub was renovated in 1989 but remains substantially unchanged. The architecture has been described as '1930s roadhouse' and it is reminiscent of some examples of the time albeit within a more urban setting. It is a two-storey red brick building with a central projecting block and two side blocks with bar entrances. Slightly darker red bricks are used across the façade beneath the first floor windows and as quoins. It has a tiled hipped roof. The central pediment above the first floor windows and the decorative use of columns suggest grandeur.

Historic Interest – (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:

The public house was built to serve the growing community of Norcot along the Oxford Road. The area was part of Tilehurst until 1911 when, along with Caversham, it was absorbed into the Borough of Reading. As such it is an important part of the history and expansion of the Reading urban area. The public house was a place for social gatherings from the time it opened until its closure in the 2010s. As well as darts and bar billiard teams, it also held musical events over the years. It was opened as an H & G Simonds house, later part of Courage and remained so until 1977 when it became an Ind Coope pub. At the time of the renaming and refurbishment in 1989 it was owned by Halls of Oxford. The 1989 works were criticised by regulars who were '...worried that it could be turned into a yuppies' wine bar'. A 300 signature petition was organised by Andre Goswell who told the Reading Post 'It could do with a bit of redecoration, but we like it as it is. We don't want it changed.' 'The brewery owners said that they wanted to improve the pub for existing customers.' [Reading Evening Post 4 April 1989].

Architectural Interest – (b) Innovation and Virtuosity: (ii) The building or structure is the work of a notable local or national architect/engineer/builder:

The architecture of the Restoration has many similarities with the smaller Bird in Hand in Lower Armour Road and so it is possible that it was designed by H & G Simonds in house architects department.

Architectural Interest – (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:

The public house was built at about the same time as the adjacent row of shops which also served the local community. The similarity in late 1920s/early 1930s architecture is apparent and they make a pleasing group on the north side of this section of Oxford Road.

(ii) The buildings/structures are an example of deliberate town planning from before 1947:

The Norcot Housing Estate was built on 45 acres of land acquired from the trustees of the late Sir Walter Palmer to erect '300 houses for the working classes' to meet the post First World War demand for housing in the town and the country as a whole. At the time that the acquisition was proposed in 1919 was not felt necessary to provide the incoming residents with '...sundry establishments, churches, chapels, public halls etc.' due to the proximity to Reading. [Reading Observer 4 October 1919] Over time things changed and facilities including public houses were required. In relation to the public house, Albert Blake the first landlord, gave notice to the authorities that he was applying to move his licence to sell alcohol from The Bell on Church Street (off London Street) and transfer it to the new pub being erected on Oxford Road. [Reading Standard 21 January 1928] The pub and shops were strategically located opposite the junction with Selborne Gardens.

4. Consultations

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

- Raj Singh Hargun and Gurjant Singh Hargun (landowner);
- Kentwood Ward councillors;
- Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee;
- Reading Civic Society;
- Tilehurst GLOBE;
- Tilehurst Residents' and Community Association; and
- West Reading Together.

4.2. Response was received from Reading Civic Society.

4.3. Reading Civic Society

Interesting to see this be nominated. It is a tricky one.

We are under no illusions that it would be a pub ever again. Having recently stopped to walk past the building, and the nearby shops, I note none of them are thriving. It is all a long way from when the shops and the pub building served the local community (ref the nomination form). However together with this building they are very much symbolic of their time.

As ever the challenge is finding a suitable use for the building if it is added to the Local List. I have noted on passing (fore and back to Waitrose) that the upper floor is certainly occupied, presumably by squatters (if that is the right term these days), and indeed the externals of the upper floor windows appear to have been painted.

Looking forward we would encourage a use for housing as that seems to be achievable practically, without a massive amount of work/ costs and with the least impact on the building. The owner doing a "fancy" development would hardly be encouraged by the presence of the car wash centre next door, which adds not a thing to the street, and the industrial estate behind.

If approved it will be the only LL in that “area” of West Reading. It right that LL is not just for very visible buildings in the town centre.

The RCS view is that it is worthy of consideration for adding to the Local List.

So bottom line. Supported.

- 4.4. No response has been received from ward councillors.
- 4.5. No response has been received from the landowner.
- 4.6. Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee advised that they made the initial nomination and therefore, did not make any further comment on the proposal for local listing.
- 4.7. No response has been received from the community groups.

5. Assessment

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).

5.1. Exclusions

- 5.1.1 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. The Restoration Public House is not within any of these existing designations and can therefore be considered against the other criteria.

5.2. General principles

- 5.2.1 The Restoration Public House dates from the 1920s and therefore, needs to be considered against the following general principle:

c. 1914 - 1939: Any building, structure or group of buildings where the elements that contribute to a high level of significance in the local context remain substantially complete.

- 5.2.2 The Restoration Public House, whilst little information has been gathered about its history, appears named ‘The Bell’ on the Ordnance Survey map of 1931-1932, confirming the date of 1928 on the nomination file. It is a fine example of a typical suburban inter-war pub constructed on a main road, forming a prominent building against the monotony of architecture of the Norcot Estate development. The Restoration Public House is notable that the building’s original scale, proportions, design, and the neo-Georgian / neoclassical style ornaments on its exterior have not been changed through large-scale additions or alterations. The recent removal of the original timber windows and internal alterations of 1989 is considered minimal and reversible; the building remains largely complete and intact.

5.3. Significance

- 5.3.1 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.

- 5.3.2 The Restoration Public House is not considered to fulfil this criterion.

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.

- 5.3.3 The most conspicuous feature of the Restoration Public House is its being the centre of the social life of the 1920s and 1930s new housing development in Tilehurst, which was taken into the borough in 1911. It was built on the extended major arterial, Oxford Road, and opened as an H. & G. Simonds Ltd, the historic brewing company of Reading, to serve vast populations. In the form of a larger public house to provide refreshments, food other than alcohol, recreation opportunities, and games to all members of the community; the Restoration has been a social base of gatherings, darts and billiard games and music events until its closure in the 2010s.

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.

- 5.3.4 The Restoration Public House is not considered to fulfil this criterion.

Architectural Interest

a. Sense of place

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

- 5.3.5 The Restoration Public House is not considered to fulfil 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.

- 5.3.6 Whilst the design of the public house is referred (by the nomination file) to H & G Simonds in-house architects and the Restoration Pub has very similar architectural features to another pub, the Bird in Hand, as the 1950s being active years of the architect's department of the brewery estate and the building is not known as the work of notable architect, this could not be confirmed. Therefore, this criterion is not met.

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.

- 5.3.7 On a larger scale, the public house is further connected to the 1920s and 1930s garden suburb and garden city movements, which had a deep influence on low-rise housing, more irregular layouts often incorporating cul-de-sacs and closes, green spaces and gardens and large estates built in considerable quantities following the Housing Act of 1919. It was created along with the shopping parade, at 930-940 Oxford Road, of the same architectural style, constituting a group value of prominence within the streetscape, and it was situated between the railway line to the north and the Norcot Housing Estate to the south, reflecting characteristics of the typical inter-war pub and needs of the local community. As such, the Restoration Public House makes a

considerable contribution to the suburban townscape of Reading and gives Oxford Road a distinctive character.

5.4. Conclusion of assessment

5.4.1 The Restoration Public House 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 1914 and 1939 and the elements that contribute to a high level of significance in the local context remain substantially complete;
- Contributes to the heritage of the Borough in terms of its social importance;
- Contributes to the heritage of the Borough in terms of its group value.

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

6. Contribution to strategic aims

6.1. Local listing of buildings and structures helps to achieve the Healthy Environment theme of the Corporate Plan, by helping to retain those buildings that contribute towards making Reading a more attractive place to live and connect Reading's residents to the town's past.

7. Environmental and climate implications

7.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

7.2. 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. However, in the long-term, it can be more difficult to achieve high levels of energy performance in older buildings than in new builds. There are therefore potentially either positive or negative effects, and schemes will need to be assessed at the application stage in terms of their compliance with the Council's policies.

8. Community engagement

8.1. Details of the consultation carried out are set out in section 4 of this report. The scope of consultation to be carried out on proposals for addition to the Local List was part of the local listing process agreed by Planning Applications Committee on 2nd December 2020 (Minute 56 refers).

9. Equality impact assessment

9.1. 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.

10. Other relevant considerations

10.1 None of this report.

11. Legal implications

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

12. Financial implications

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

13. Timetable for implementation

13.1. Not applicable.

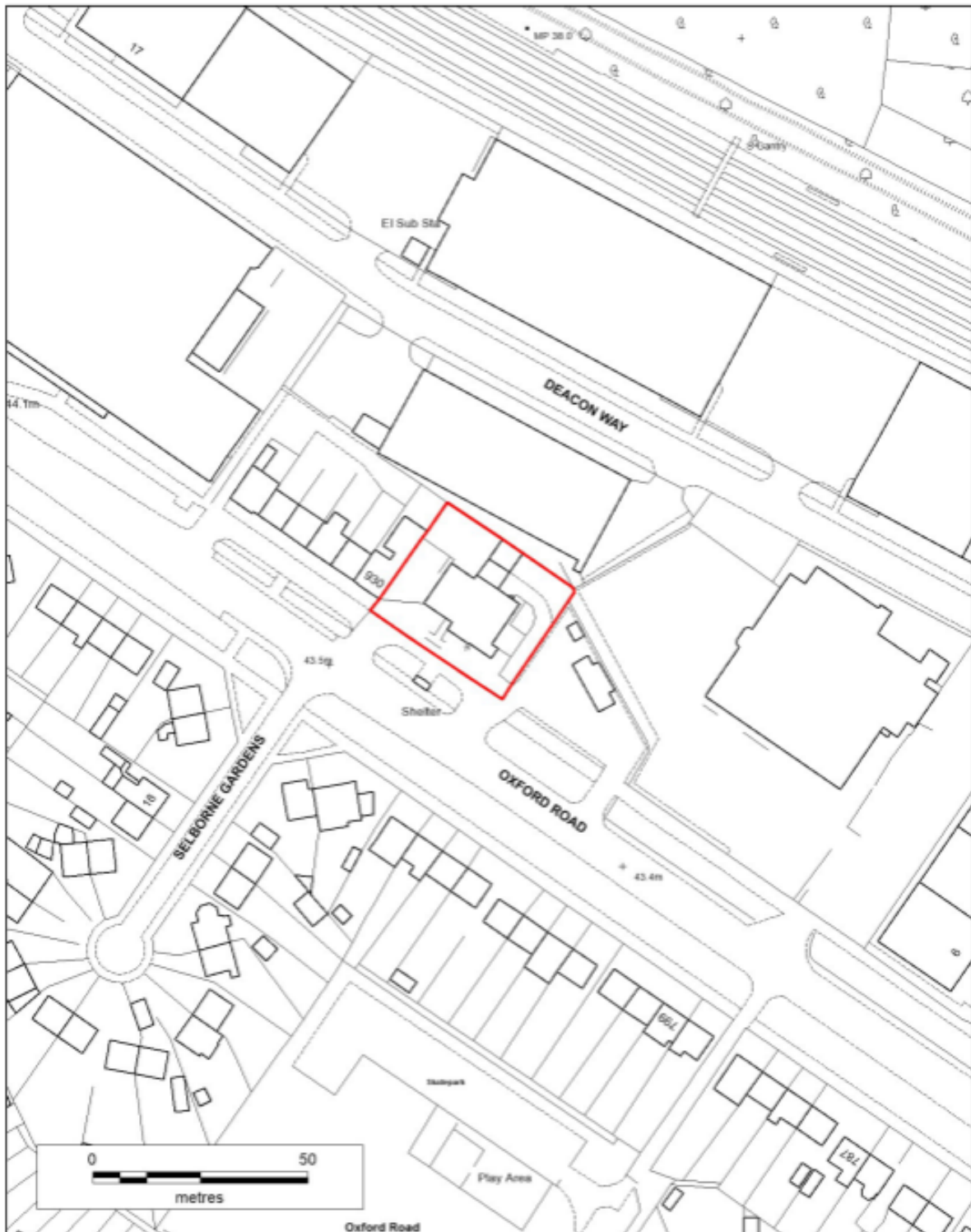
14. Background papers

14.1. There are none.

Appendices

1. **Location map**
2. **Relevant photos and illustrations**
3. **Nomination form**
4. **Proposed local list text**

Appendix 1: Location plan



The Restoration Public House, 928 Oxford Road

Nominated for inclusion on List

Scale 1: 1250  **Reading**
Borough Council

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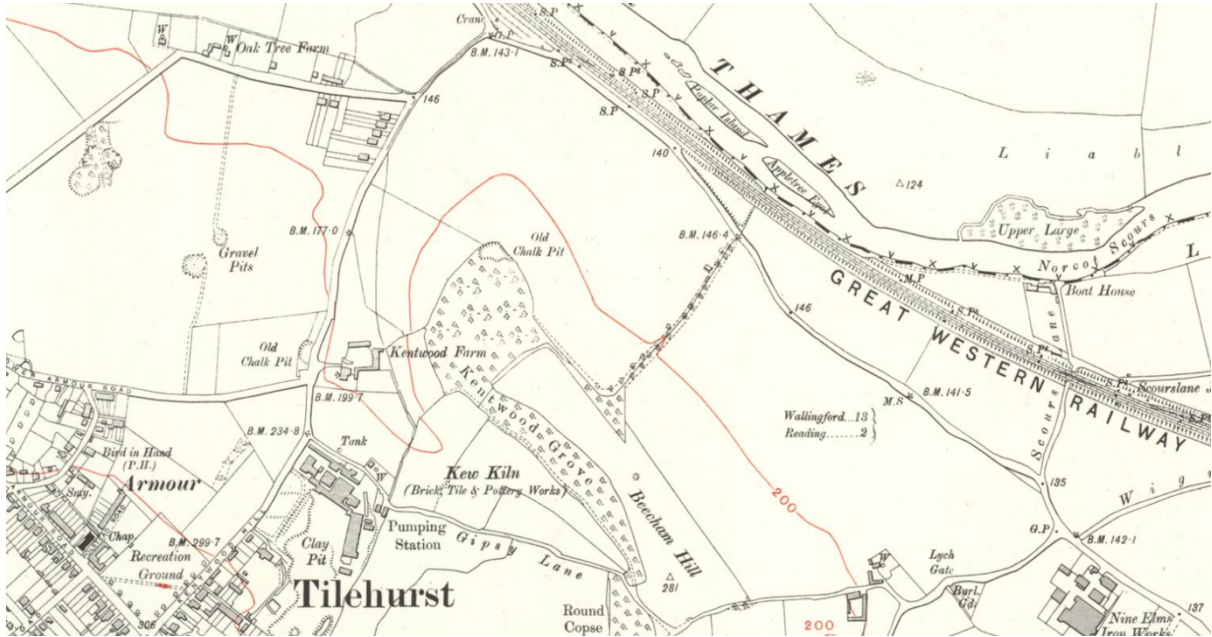
Appendix 2: Relevant photos and illustrations



View of the Restoration Public House in 2009, Google Streetview



View of the Restoration Public House in 2021, Google Streetview



Ordnance Survey Map of 1914



Ordnance Survey Map of 1931-1932 (published in 1934), the public house circled in red



Street view of the Restoration Public House and adjacent shopping parade, 2019



Aerial View of the Restoration Public House



Old Photograph of the Bird in Hand, from <https://tilehurstmemories.org.uk/>

Appendix 3: Nomination form

Nomination information

Address of building/structure: The Restoration Public House
928 Oxford Road

Postcode of building/structure: RG30 6TJ

Owner of building (if known):

Age of building: (c) 1914 - 1939: any building, structure or group of buildings that is/are substantially complete and unaltered and of a high level of significance

Please provide comments or further explanation of above: The (now closed) Restoration Public House was built in 1928. It was originally known as The Bell and changed its name in 1989.

The public house and row of shops to the west serviced residential properties to the south that were built on the Norcot Estate following the First World War.

The pub was renovated in 1989 but remains substantially unchanged. The architecture has been described as '1930s roadhouse' and it is reminiscent of some examples of the time albeit within a more urban setting. It is a two-storey red brick building with a central projecting block and two side blocks with bar entrances. Slightly darker red bricks are used across the façade beneath the first floor windows and as quoins. It has a tiled hipped roof. The central pediment above the first floor windows and the decorative use of columns suggest grandeur.

The building or structure has a well authenticated historical association with a notable person(s) or event: No

Please provide further comments or explanation:

The building or structure has a prolonged and direct association with figures or events of local interest: No

Please provide further comments or explanation:

The building or structure has played an influential role in the development of an area or the life of one of Reading's communities: Yes

Please provide further comments or explanation: The public house was built to serve the growing community of Norcot along the Oxford Road. The area was part of Tilehurst until 1911 when, along with Caversham, it was absorbed into the Borough of Reading. As such it is an important part of the history and expansion of the Reading urban area.

The public house was a place for social gatherings from the time it opened until its closure in the 2010s. As well as darts and bar billiard teams, it also held musical events over the years.

It was opened as an H & G Simonds house, later part of Courage and remained so until 1977 when it became an Ind Coope pub. At the time of the renaming and refurbishment in 1989 it was owned by Halls of Oxford.

The 1989 works were criticised by regulars who were '...worried that it could be turned into a yuppies' wine bar. A 300 signature petition was organised by Andre Goswell who told the Reading Post 'It could do with a bit of redecoration, but we like it as it is. We don't want it changed. The brewery owners said that they wanted to improve the pub for existing customers.' [Reading Evening Post 4 April 1989].

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: No

Please provide further comments or explanation:

The building or structure is representative of a style that is characteristic of Reading: No

Please provide further comments or explanation:

The building or structure has a noteworthy quality of workmanship and materials: No

Please provide further comments or explanation:

The building or structure is the work of a notable local or national architect/engineer/builder: Yes

Please provide further comments or explanation: The architecture of the Restoration has many similarities with the smaller Bird in Hand in Lower Armour Road and so it is possible that it was designed by H & G Simonds in house architects department.

The building or structure shows innovation in materials, technique, architectural style or engineering: No

Please provide further comments or explanation:

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

Please provide further comments or explanation: The public house was built at about the same time as the adjacent row of shops which also served the local community. The similarity in late 1920s/early 1930s architecture is apparent and they make a pleasing group on the north side of this section of Oxford Road.

The buildings/structures are an example of deliberate town planning from before 1947: Yes

Please provide further comments or explanation: The Norcot Housing Estate was built on 45 acres of land acquired from the trustees of the late Sir Walter Palmer to erect '300 houses for the working classes' to meet the post First World War demand for housing in the town and the country as a whole. At the time that the acquisition was proposed in 1919 was not felt necessary to provide the incoming residents with '...sundry establishments, churches, chapels, public halls etc.' due to the proximity to Reading. [Reading Observer 4 October 1919]

Over time things changed and facilities including public houses were required. In relation to the public house, Albert Blake the first landlord, gave notice to the authorities that he was applying to move his licence to sell alcohol from The Bell on Church Street (off London Street) and transfer it to the new pub being erected on Oxford Road. [Reading Standard 21 January 1928]

The pub and shops were strategically located opposite the junction with Selborne Gardens.

Please upload any evidence you have assembled that help to make the case as to why the building or structure fulfils the above criteria: Restoration APPENDIX 1.docx, Restoration APPENDIX 2.docx

Please briefly describe the relevance of the evidence you have attached: 1. Local newspaper references as cited in the text.

2. John Dearing, David Cliffe and Evelyn Williams. Abbot Cook to Zero Degrees. An A to Z of Reading's Pubs & Breweries.

3. Emily Cole for Historic England (2015). The Urban and Suburban Public House in Inter-war England 1918-1939.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/results/reports/4-2015>

4. Maps – Appendix 1

5. Images - Appendix 2

Please provide any additional comments that you would like to make in support of adding this building or structure to the Local List: It is not realistic to expect that The Restoration can ever re-open as a public house. Its importance and significance in the local community from the time it opened in 1928 to when it closed, as well as its pleasing between the wars pub architecture make it worthy of protection by being placed on the local list.

The Historic England publication (see references) was undertaken in part because of the need to protect public houses of this period. The Appendix lists some examples from Reading, not all of which survive today e.g. The Four Horseshoes on Basingstoke Road. Unlike some of those pubs the Restoration was a completely new site and is worthy of recognition for its unique contribution to the fabric of Reading community life.

Date of nomination: 09/08/2023

Appendix 3: Proposed local list text

A fine example of an Inter-War period public house built in 1928. The pub has two storeys, brick walls in Flemish bond and a hipped roof with plain tiles. Use of classical details, the projected frontispiece with a semi-circular arch gable in the eaves and Tuscan order style moulding at the door and window surrounds on the ground floor, and asymmetrical façade, plain and well-proportioned design with clear forms point to the Neo-Georgian architecture with a possible influence of Arts and Crafts.

The most conspicuous feature of the Restoration Public House is its being the centre of the social life of the 1920s new housing development in suburban Reading, shaping a collective experience and memory of 'communal value'. It was built on the extended major arterial, Oxford Road, and opened as an H. & G. Simonds Ltd, the historic brewing company of Reading, to serve vast populations. In the form of a 'roadhouse' to provide refreshments, food other than alcohol, recreation opportunities, and games to all community members, the Restoration was a social base of gatherings, darts, billiard games and music events until its closure in the 2010s.

On a larger scale, the Restoration Public House contributes considerably to the suburban townscape of Reading and gives Oxford Road a distinctive character. It is directly connected to the 1920s and 1930s 'garden suburb' and 'garden city movements', which had a deep influence on low-rise housing, more irregular layouts often incorporating cul-de-sacs and closes, green spaces, gardens and large estates built in considerable quantities following the Housing Act of 1919. It was created along with the shopping parade at Nos 930 to 940, of the same architectural style, constituting a 'group value' of prominence within the streetscape, and it was situated between the railway line to the north and the Norcot Housing Estate to the south, reflecting characteristics of the typical inter-war pub and needs of the local community.