

Planning Applications Committee

07 October 2026



Reading
Borough Council
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Title	LOCAL LISTING REPORT – The TGWU Signage on 89 Southampton Street
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	Katesgrove
Address	89 Southampton Street, Reading, RG1 2QU
Recommendations	The Committee is asked: To agree that the TGWU Signage on 89 Southampton Street not be added to the List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. To report on a proposal to add the TGWU (Transport and General Worker's Union) Signage on 89 Southampton Street to the List of Locally-Important Buildings and Structures. It is considered that the nominated signage does not meet the criteria for locally listed buildings and structures as defined under Appendix 2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, 2019.

2. Policy context

- 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 2nd December 2020 that decisions on additions to the Local List should be made at PAC.
- 2.2. 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 09/07/2026 to add the TGWU Signage at 89 Southampton Street 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 signage of the offices for Transport & General Workers Union, dated 1989/1990, is located on the southern flank wall of the modern building.



The nominated TGWU Signage at 89 Southampton Street (image is from Google Street View)

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

3.4. **Nomination details:**

"In 1989 the Transport & General Workers Union moved from premises on 36 King's Road where it had been since the 1954 to new premises on the ground and first floors of 89 Southampton Street. The opening and unveiling of a plaque took place in February 1990 by Mr Ron Todd general secretary 1985-1992 and Mayor, Councillor Maureen Lockey. The plaque was probably inside the building (Evening Post 7 February 1990). The T G W U lettering on the side of the building and a similar sign on the front which was illuminated were originally allowed by advertising consent 890102 in May 1989. Although the description of the application is for two illuminated signs, the plans show only one to be illuminated. The plans also show the layout of the office accommodation on two floors. At some point the TGWU lettering on the front was replaced by a T & G sign and a T & G sign added to the side of the building. In 2007 the TGWU merged with Amicus to form Unite. The T & G sign on the front of the building was removed sometime between September 2012 and July 2014 but the larger sign on the side and TGWU lettering remains and is worthy of protection in situ as a record of Reading's trade union history. The building is now flats. The signage is a heritage asset as defined by Planning Practice Guidance because of its historic interest as it '...provide[s] meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity'. [ref Historic England Advice Note No 7 – Local Heritage Listing] Although Reading does not have any features such as signage on a building that have been locally listed there are precedents in other authorities: • An early twentieth century clock on the wall of 27 Silver Street in Enfield • Two ghost signs in Hackney: Blooms Piano sign in Shoreditch and the Fountain Pen sign on Church Street, Stoke Newington Although this local listing nomination is for the signage not the building in itself, we have attempted to respond to all relevant questions."

"THIS NOMINATION WAS FIRST SUBMITTED ON 17 JULY 2023 Many of the sites associated with the history of Reading's trade union movement have all but disappeared. Some other examples of those that survive and those that have been lost below. They may be worthy of local listing and/or a 'blue plaque'. This list is not

exhaustive. • The building occupied (1914-1924) by the Trade Union Club at 40 Oxford Road still exists. • 36 King's Road the offices of the TGWU from 28 June 1954 (Reading Standard 25 June 1954) is one of the buildings that makes up the House of Flavours. • The Trade Union Club at the eastern end of Minster Street, occupied since 1924, was demolished in the 1980s. The club moved to Chatham Street in 1985 but closed in 1995. (<https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/education/educational-images/trades-union-club-reading-berkshire-2863>) Some buildings are protected as they are listed • In early 1943 the TGWU had a temporary office on the top floor the W I Palmer Memorial Building on West Street which is a listed building. (Reading Standard 5 March 1943)”

Historic interest details:

“The signage is one of the few remaining physical remnants of Reading’s Trade Union history. The TGWU (1922-2007) was an important union in Reading. Its members were employed in Reading businesses such as transport companies and the Courage Brewery. We have not established when and by whom the logo was designed. The signage has a rarity value in situ as the union has now merged to form Unite and new signage is in use on premises. The TGWU is mentioned in Reading press in 1922, soon after its formation, in relation to fair pay to carmen (carters and drivers). There was a strike by employees of C & G Ayres in February 1922 over a reduction in carmen’s pay (Reading Standard 11 February 1922). The need for fair pay to carmen of haulage contractors employed by the Council was discussed at a Reading Town Council meeting on Tuesday 6 February 1922. This was based on a letter to the Town Clerk from the district organiser of the TGWU and a statement from the Borough Surveyor on wages paid (Reading Standard 10 February 1922). For a history of the early Trade Union Movement in Reading to 1945 please see: Labour in Biscuit Town. The growth of a social movement to 1945. Keith Jerrome 2001 MA thesis A fight for life and liberty. A History of Reading Trades Council. Keith Jerrome 1981 Reading Museum Blog ‘The Fight for Life and Liberty’: <https://www.readingmuseum.org.uk/blog/fight-for-life-and-liberty> A history of the Transport and General Workers Union - <https://www.unitetheunion.org/who-we-are/history/the-history-of-the-tg/> NB: At this stage we have not been able to contact anyone with direct knowledge of the TGWU at this time.”

“The building was occupied for around 20 years as the offices of the Transport & General Workers Union in Reading and therefore played an influential role in the life of Reading’s trade union community and industrial and business life.”

Architectural interest details:

“89 Southampton Street is one of a complex of 3 buildings that were erected in the c.1980s to replace a short row of shops between the Co-op funeral services building and the Customs & Excise offices. The details on the building reflect the Georgian architecture of the nearby listed buildings at 92-96 Southampton Street.”

4. Consultations

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

- Katesgrove ward councillors;
- Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee;
- Reading Civic Society; and
- Katesgrove Community Association

4.2. No responses were received.

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 TGWU Signage on 89 Southampton Street 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 TGWU signage on 89 Southampton Street dates from 1989/1990 and therefore needs to be considered against the following general principle:

d. post-1939: Any building, structure or group of buildings where the elements that contribute to its/ their exceptional heritage significance in the local context are wholly complete and unaffected by inappropriate changes.

- 5.2.2 The nominated signage is considered not to demonstrate exceptional heritage significance, as they do not appear to be a unique design example of 1990s signage. The emblem is a reproduction of TGWU's standard corporate identity, which is also used on TGWU buildings, as shown below.



TGWU Bristol Office, 2007 (Left) and TGWU Central Office Transport House in London, 2005 (Right) (from [Transport and General Workers' Union - Wikipedia](#))

The nominated signage is considered not to demonstrate exceptional heritage significance. The building at 89 Southampton Street is modern and was neither designed nor originally constructed for the TGWU; therefore, the signage lacks a strong relationship with its original architectural and functional context. As a post-1939 building or structure, it does not appear to possess the exceptional significance required by the Council's Local List selection criteria. In addition, the association of signage is incidental to a period of occupancy in this building rather than integral to the building's architecture or historic identity.

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 TGWU Signage on 89 Southampton Street is not considered to fulfil this criterion. Although the use of the ground floor of the building by TGWU creates an association, this is not 'prolonged and direct', and it is considered that the union's occupation of 20-25 years alone does not establish this. From the nomination file, it is noted that the building at 36 King's Road was used by the TGWU between 1954 and 1989, and the historic photograph of that time shows that the nominated signage cannot be directly associated with that building.



King's Road, Reading, c. 1983. The south side. No. 36 (office of the Transport and General Workers' Union, with "T. & G. W. U." on the fascia, and part of No. 34 (Dunster and Morton, estate agents). 1980-1989: photograph by Terry Allsop (from the Reading Library's Online Archive)

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 TGWU Signage on 89 Southampton Street is not considered to fulfil this criterion. There is not sufficient evidence submitted or found that this particular signage or building at 89 Southampton Street played an influential role in the life of the Reading community or acted as an important social or organisational focal point. The nominated signage expresses Reading's late twentieth-century social and labour history as an isolated piece of former corporate branding. The TGWU's later dissolution does not, by itself, make this signage socially important.

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 TGWU Signage on 89 Southampton Street 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 TGWU Signage on 89 Southampton Street is not considered to fulfil this criterion. The building hosting the TGWU signage is modern and residential, and the standard corporate signage is not evidently representative of a style characteristic of Reading.

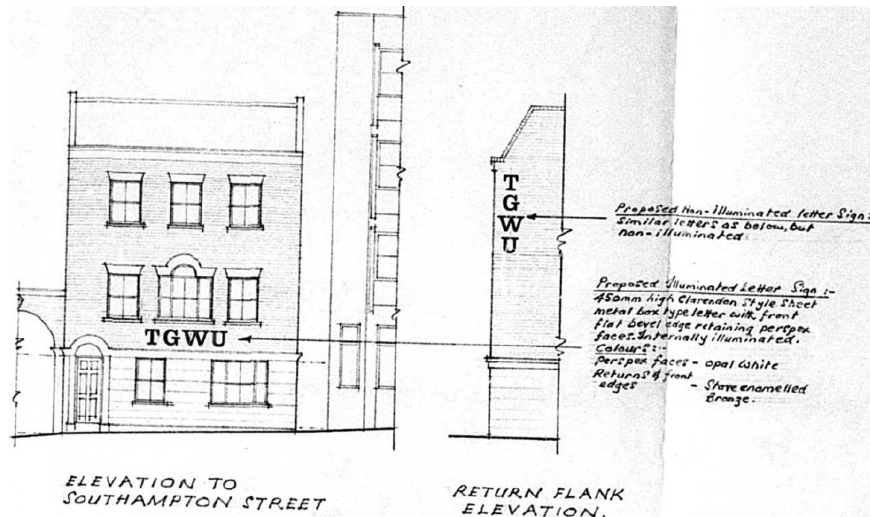
b. Innovation and virtuosity

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 The TGWU Signage on 89 Southampton Street is not considered to fulfil this criterion. It is not demonstrated that the nominated signage is bespoke or a unique design. No notable designer, architect or maker has been identified. From the planning history, it is noted that the lettering on the side elevation of the building was consented on 18 May 1989. However, there is no information about the design/designer of the nominated signage.



Drawings from the consented signage in 1989, ref. PL/89/0102 (89/00513/ADV)

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 The TGWU Signage on 89 Southampton Street is not considered to fulfil this criterion. Whilst in the nomination file it is stated that “*The details on the building reflect the Georgian architecture of the nearby listed buildings at 92-96 Southampton Street.*”, the design of the subject modern building is rather pastiche in appearance and without the architectural language of the 1980s. It appears that it was influenced by the Grade II listed 92-96 Southampton Street; however, this does not give the building a group value. The listed building dates from 1813-1814 and was designed by a known architect, Richard Billing. Additionally, the two buildings have no strong visual relationship. The building at 89 Southampton Street, due to its scale, height and appearance, does not create a contradictory element on the street. It does not share the same period, characteristics and heritage value as the listed terrace. Therefore, it is not agreed that the nominated asset forms a group which, as a whole, has a unified architectural or historic value to the local area.



View of the nominated signage on 89 Southampton Street, the listed building at Nos 92-96 is circled (from Google Street View, September 2024)

5.4. Conclusion of assessment

5.4.1 The TGWU signage on 89 Southampton Street does not qualify for addition to the Local List because it:

- Dates from after 1939 and the elements that contribute to its exceptional heritage significance in the local context are not wholly complete and are affected by inappropriate changes, because it is not considered to demonstrate exceptional heritage significance;
- Does not contribute to the heritage of the Borough in terms of any of the defined criteria in the Local Plan.

5.4.2 The nominated signage is considered neither a particular design to Reading nor specifically a 1990s design, as it appears to have considerably older origins within the TGWU's visual identity. While the scale of the signage may be less common, similar signage is noted in other cities. The building where the signage is located is architecturally ordinary, and given TGWU's historic context in Reading, the meaningful union-related use or connection to an important local or labour event is not considered sufficient to merit local listing. Although the signage provides evidence of TGWU's presence in Reading, its relationship to the physical, social, and architectural aspects of Reading's historic environment is limited.

6. Contribution to strategic aims

6.1. The Council Plan 2025-28 identifies five priorities:

- Promote more equal communities in Reading
- Secure Reading's economic and cultural success
- Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce Reading's carbon footprint
- Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children
- Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future

6.2. Local listing of buildings and structures helps to secure Reading's cultural success and deliver a healthy environment, 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. Health implications

- 10.1 No health implications have been identified of the recommended decision.

11. Other relevant considerations

- 11.1 None of this report.

12. Legal implications

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

13. Financial implications

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

14. Timetable for implementation

- 14.1 Not applicable.

15. Background papers

- 15.1 There are none.

Appendices

1. **Location map**
2. **Relevant photos and illustrations submitted in the nomination**

Appendix 1: Location plan



Appendix 2: Relevant photos and illustrations submitted in the nomination as Appendix

APPENDIX 1

Images for Local Listing Nomination for TGWU signage at 89 Southampton Street

<i>Description</i>	<i>Image</i>
89 Southampton Street – south side today (Evelyn Williams)	
89 Southampton Street - September 2012 (Google Earth)	