

5 November 2025



Reading
Borough Council
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Title	PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT
Ward	Abbey
Planning Application Reference:	PL/25/1396 LBC
Site Address:	Town Hall, Blagrove Street, Reading
Proposed Development	Proposed temporary opening up works and associated initial investigations to the roof structures of Reading Town Hall.
Applicant	Reading Borough Council
Report author	Marcie Rejwerska
Deadline:	25 November 2025
Recommendations	Grant listed building consent, subject to conditions.
Conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Time Limit – Three Years2. In accordance with approved plans and methodology
Informatives	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Terms2. Positive and Proactive

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. The proposal seeks consent for temporary investigation works which require opening some parts of the Town Hall roof internally. The aim of the investigation is to inspect the roof structure due to the ongoing water ingress which is damaging the historic fabric of the building. The works are considered necessary and acceptable.
- 1.2. The proposal is recommended for approval subject to the conditions as outlined above.

2. Introduction and site description

- 2.1. The Town Hall is a Grade II* listed building. The site was previously part Grade II and part Grade II* listed but the listing was amended in 2023 to designate the entire site as Grade II* listed. The relevant section of the official listing reads as follows:
MATERIALS: the Waterhouse building is of blue-grey bricks laid in English bond with rubbed brick dressings and a tiled roof. The Lainson block to its north is in a similar Gothic revival style with darker grey bricks and red brick and Corsehill sandstone dressings and the later Art Gallery by Cooper and Howell combines both types of blue-grey brick.

The full listing description can be found on the Historic England register (ref 1113400). The site is within the Abbey Quarter and the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area.

- 2.2. In accordance with the Constitution of the Council as the application is submitted on behalf of the Council it is required to be determined by Planning Applications Committee.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. Listed Building Consent is sought for temporary opening up works in various areas on the north side of the Town Hall (see plans in Appendix), both internally and externally. This comprises minor intrusions into the fabric, such as removal of ceiling plasterboard and removal of roof tiles where necessary. The locations for opening up have been identified to be in areas where there will be least disturbance of original historic fabric. The methodology also states that once investigations are complete, all areas will be made good and original material replaced so that there will be no long term impact on the site.

- 3.2. Documents and plans received:

997-Reading Town Hall - Opening Up Listed Building Consent-Cover Letter
997-Reading Town Hall-Heritage Statement-Revision 0-250929
997-Reading Town Hall-Design And Access Statement-Revision 0-250929
997-001-PL00-Location Plan And Existing And Proposed Block Plans
997-002-PL00-Existing And Proposed Site Plans
997-015-PL00-Existing Roof Plan
997-272-PL00-Roof RF22 Temporary Access And Investigations
997-260-PL00-Roof RF10 Temporary Access And Investigations
997-267-PL00-Roof RF17 Temporary Access And Investigations
997-257-PL00-Roof RF7 Temporary Access And Investigations
997-263-PL00-Roof RF13 Temporary Access And Investigations
997-258-PL00-Roof RF8 Temporary Access And Investigations
997-261-PL00-Roof RF11 Temporary Access And Investigations
997-271-PL00-Roof RF21 Temporary Access And Investigations
997-268-PL00-Roof RF18 Temporary Access And Investigations
997-259-PL00-Roof RF9 Temporary Access And Investigations
997-270-PL00-Roof RF20 Temporary Access And Investigations
997-264-PL00-Roof RF14 Temporary Access And Investigations
997-262-PL00-Roof RF12 Temporary Access And Investigations
997-269-PL00-Roof RF19 Temporary Access And Investigations
997-266-PL00-Roof RF16 Temporary Access And Investigations
997-273-PL00-Roof RF23 Temporary Access And Investigations

Received by the LPA on 30 September 2025

4. Relevant Planning History

- PL/91/0804 - External sign (un-illuminated) in 250mm high gold Times Roman Typeface to read Gift Shop to west (Blagrove St) elevation. Application permitted.
- PL/01/0573 - Installation of 2no. vertical sliding sash timber windows, to be in keeping with existing windows, to the Earley charities room, including soldier courses above heads to match. Application permitted.
- PL/06/0052 - Exterior signage - 2 no. non-illuminated banners and vinyl lettering to doors. Application permitted.
- PL/06/0159 – Exterior signage - 2 no. non-illuminated banners and vinyl lettering to doors. Application withdrawn.

- PL/06/0198 - External signage - 2 no. external banners, signs and lettering to doors. Application withdrawn.
- PL/06/1330 - External signage - 2 no. external banners, signs and lettering to doors. Application permitted.
- PL/17/0987 - Internal alterations including, refurbishment of cafe and bar areas, replacement of bar area steps with new steps and wheelchair platform lift, replacement partition walls, refurbishment of toilets, replacement lighting and additional doors. Application permitted.
- PL/17/1223 - Erection of a galvanised walkway to assist with access for maintenance of ventilating plant to the roof of the Huntley & Palmers Gallery of the museum. Application permitted.
- PL/19/0327 - Installation of 1 x non-illuminated hanging sign, 1 x non-illuminated wall mounted sign, 1 x non-illuminated over-head doorway sign and 8 x window vinyls. Application permitted.
- PL/19/0567 - Installation of 1 x non-illuminated hanging sign, 1 x non-illuminated wall mounted sign, 1 x non-illuminated over-head doorway sign and 8 x window vinyls. Application permitted.
- PL/19/1632 - Retention of existing signs and interpretation panels on a permanent basis (application 170962) and proposed of extra directional signage in the Town Centre on a permanent basis. Application permitted.
- PL/25/0885 - Replace existing timber double fire door with a new metal double door. Application permitted.

5. Consultations

- 5.1 The planning notice was attached to nearby street furniture on 7th October 2025 and left in place for a minimum of 21 days (until 28th October 2025). A press advert was also published in the local paper.

No letters of representation have been received although the consultation period is ongoing.

- 5.2 Statutory consultees:

- **Historic England** – Confirmed no comments to make.
- **RCAAC** - No comments received.
- **RBC Conservation Officer** – Confirmed no objections.

6. Legal context

- 6.1 Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the LPA to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

- 6.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

- 6.3 In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).
- 6.4 Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (amended February 2025)
National Planning Practice Guidance (2014 onwards)
Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance 2008, Historic England
HEAG304 Listed Building Consent, Historic England Advice Note 16, 2021

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

Policy EN1 – Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
Policy EN3 – Enhancement of Conservation Areas

7. Appraisal

- 7.1. Policy EN1 states "Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings."
- 7.2. The proposed works will affect localised areas internally and externally. Internally, areas of ceiling finishes to be removed are all modern gypsum plasterboard, or areas previously damaged beyond repair due to water ingress. No original historic fabric is to be removed or damaged in the process. Externally, where areas of the roof are to be accessed, no original fabric is proposed to be removed or altered. Where some roof slates may need to be temporarily removed to allow access, these will be re-laid following the conclusion of the investigative works.
- 7.3. The only proposed interaction with original historic features as part of this application is the visual inspection and measured survey of the historic roof lantern structure below Roof 13. Access will be provided from below through the ceiling using a scaffold tower, and no works that physically affect the historic roof lantern structure are to be undertaken.
- 7.4. All investigative works will be temporary in nature, and all temporarily removed / displaced fabric will be reinstated and made good once investigations have been concluded. There will be no long-term impact on the appearance of the heritage asset when viewed from the public domain, both from street level and from the internal public spaces.
- 7.5. Overall, it is considered that the works are acceptable and would result in a net benefit to enable the investigations to be carried out.

8. Equality implications

- 8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2 The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this application.

9. Conclusion

9.2 The proposal comprises minimal works to allow investigation of the roof structure and will have minimal harm on the original historic fabric. The works are considered necessary to allow engineers to address the existing issue of water ingress, and the methodology will have no harm on the significance of the heritage asset nor the wider Conservation Area. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

Plans

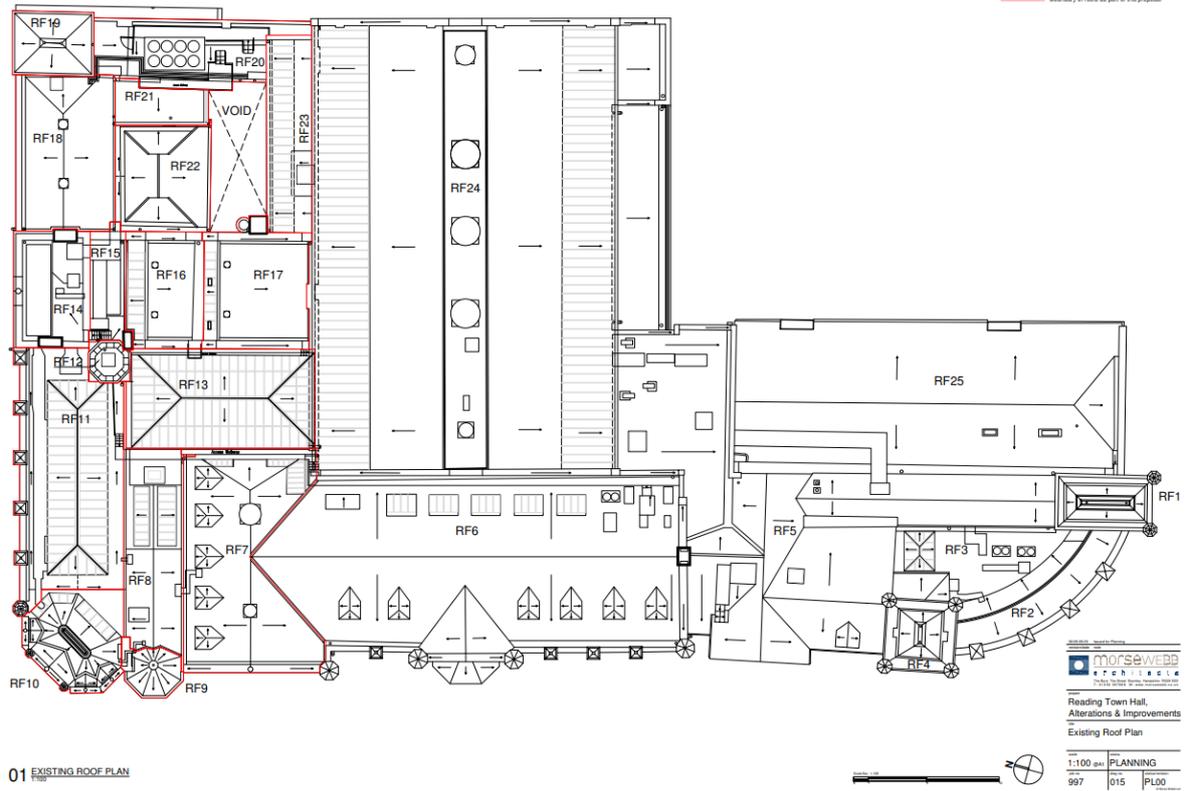


Figure 1 Areas affected individually labelled.

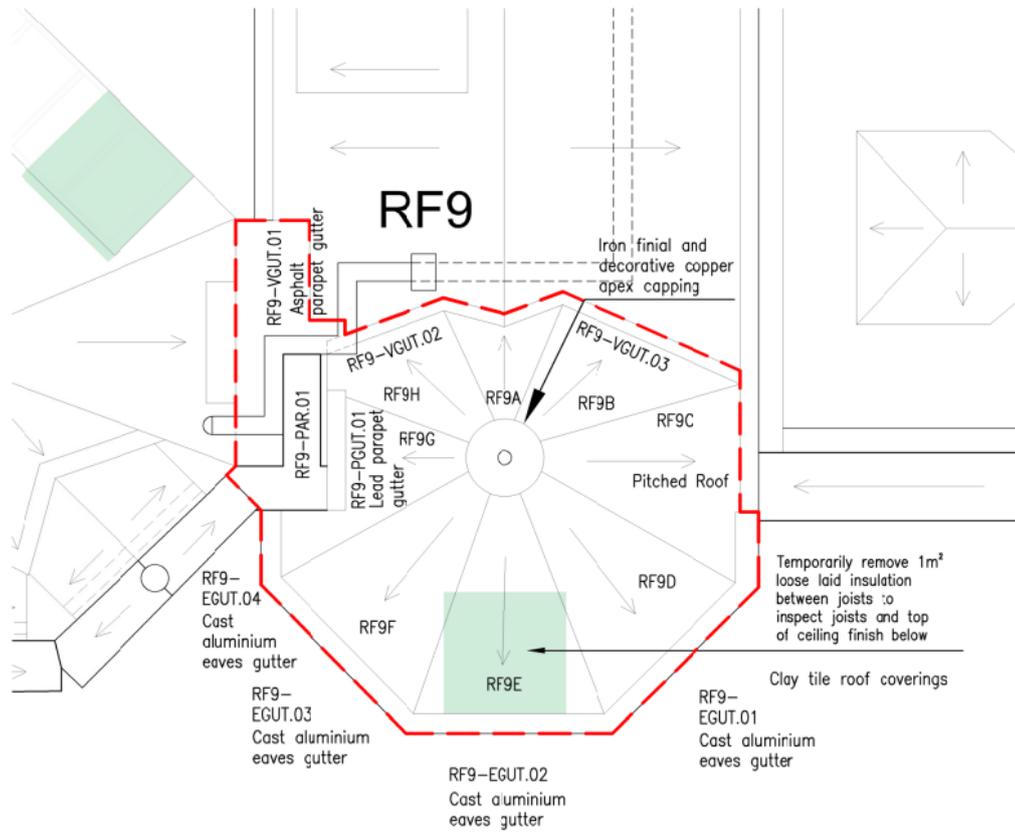


Figure 2 Front turret as example