



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 October 2025

by **B Phillips BSc MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/Y/25/3363075

The Sun Public House, 16 Castle Street, Reading RG1 7RD

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Heartwood Inn Ltd against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PL/24/0954.
 - The works proposed is erection of illuminated sign to front elevation.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and listed building consent is granted for the erection of illuminated sign to front elevation at The Sun Public House, 16 Castle Street, Reading RG1 7RD in accordance with the terms of the application Ref PL/24/0954 and the plans submitted with it, reference Site Plan, 227772-Planning Retro 2 DD, Proposed Elevations.

Preliminary Matters

2. An associated application for advertisement consent, PL/24/0952, was also refused, but is not a matter for the appeal before me.
3. I have removed the word retrospective from the description above as this does not describe works. However, for clarification, I observed at my site visit that the signage is in place in accordance with the plans before me and therefore I have considered the appeal on the basis that the works have already taken place.
4. The appeal relates to the Grade II listed building known as '14 and 16, Castle Street (the Sun Inn)', which is located within the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area (CA). In reaching my decision, I have considered the statutory duties under sections 16(2) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 (the Act).

Main Issues

5. The main issues in this case are whether the works preserve the listed building or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses and preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street CA.

Reasons

6. The appeal relates to a 17th century (with earlier origins) public house currently named the Rising Sun. The building was Grade II listed in 1957¹ ('14 and 16,

¹ List Entry Number: 1321964

Castle Street (the Sun Inn')) and consists of a handsome two storey (with attic) detached stucco over timber-framing structure, with a tiled roof, and later extensions of painted or rendered brickwork. The principal elevation facing Castle Street has a half hipped gable to right of centre, sash windows on the first floor and one smaller attic window in the gable. The ground floor has a modern square bay bar window to left of centre, with a central entrance flanked by 2 cast iron columns. The listing description refers to an irregular composition at the rear with three historic wings and several infill extensions, a considerable amount of exposed timber-framing inside, and states that the public house is also reputed to be on the site of the former Reading Gaol.

7. Castle Street forms part of the ancient route through Reading between London and the West Country and historically contained many inns and guesthouses the building is nearby a large number of listed buildings. As such, it forms part of a strong historic grouping.
8. Given the above, I find that the special interest and significance of the listed building to be primarily associated with its historic and architectural interests as a good illustration of a 17th century public house, one of the oldest in Reading, that reflects part of the urban development of Reading's ancient core. Important contributors in these regards which are pertinent to the appeal are its historic architectural style, group value, surviving historic fabric, detailing and features and its historic and ongoing commercial use as an inn.
9. Pertinent to the appeal, there is various existing and consented signage to the property. Not including the sign that is the subject of this appeal, there is large painted signage to both side elevations at first floor level which is externally illuminated, signage directly above the ground floor bay windows, a projecting sign that is also externally illuminated, and a board sign affixed to the wall on the front gable near the entrance door².
10. This signage is not overly prominent and, given its traditional character, with subtle downlighters, is largely sensitive to the building's historic aesthetics.
11. The character and appearance and therefore the special interest and significance of the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street CA are mainly derived from its retained medieval street pattern, focussed on the Grade I St Marys Church, and the rich variety of historic buildings that denote its evolution, including some of the oldest surviving buildings in Reading. The CA appraisal document (2008) sets out that *'The Sun Inn is now also an important corner landmark building representing the western limit of the Conservation Area to the north side of Castle Street'*. As a landmark listed building located on this historic thoroughfare and part of the CA's rich townscape, 14 and 16, Castle Street (the Sun Inn) therefore supports and sustains the positive qualities which contribute to the character and appearance of the CA as a whole and therefore to its significance as a designated heritage asset.
12. The proposal seeks consent for a first floor painted sign on the front elevation. Two overhead cowl lights illuminate the sign. The sign is located between first floor windows, and is similar in scale, design and illumination to the two side elevation painted signs.

² Signage approved under applications reference 231734/ADV & 231735/LBC

13. Given the existing first floor signage, the location of the sign in terms of its height is not incongruous, indeed, previous photographs of the frontage show that there was previously a painted sign in a more prominent position on the gable, including at a higher level, albeit not illuminated. Its scale, design and lighting, including the design of the cowl lighters, are also in keeping with the existing signage aesthetic and detail.
14. The signage is also a historically appropriate traditional painted type which does not harm any fabric and is easily reversible. Whilst the lighting does require some intervention into the fabric, this is limited and is also present elsewhere.
15. Whilst adding to the existing signage, given the scale of the building and the substantial remaining visible clear frontage, it does not result in clutter and is not overly prominent. The cumulative impact of the proposed and consented signage remains sensitive to the historic character of the building and does not harm its architectural interest nor its significance as a designated heritage asset. This is in accordance with the general design principles set out in the Council's supplementary planning document 'Design Guide to Shopfronts' (2022).
16. The surrounding CA includes various commercial businesses and public houses, and I observed numerous examples of first floor illuminated signage, and examples of internally illuminated fascia signage. As such, there is no specific consistency in this regard. In this instance, given the form and location of the signage and illumination, it sits comfortably in this context and is in keeping with the surroundings. It therefore preserves the character and appearance of the CA as a whole.
17. I conclude therefore that the works preserve Nos 14 and 16, Castle Street (the Sun Inn) and its special interest; and preserve the character and appearance of the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area. For these reasons, the appeal scheme does not conflict with the statutory presumptions set out in sections 16(2) and 72(1) of the Act and satisfies the historic environment conservation and enhancement policies of the Framework. There is also no conflict with Policies EN1 and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) which, amongst other matters, require advertisements to respect key features of special historic interest.

Conditions

18. The Council has submitted a suggested condition were the appeal to be allowed. I have considered this having regard to the advice set out in both the Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance.
19. The works are authorised on the basis of the submitted plans and any material departure from them would be unauthorised. A separate plans condition is therefore unnecessary.

Conclusion

20. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all the other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

B Phillips

INSPECTOR