

Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area

Draft Conservation Area Appraisal



The local situation of Reading is such as to claim the notice of the first Metropolis in the known world, London, and being so pleasantly situated on the high road from the second Metropolis in this kingdom, Bristol, and the most elegant and fashionable City of Europe, Bath, it cannot fail to attract and become a retreat to the independent part of society.

Thomas Jesse

Castle-Hill House, Reading

10 October 1817

passage from a letter to the Berkshire Mercury

by local property developer Thomas Jesse

12 May 2019



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Initial Statement



This appraisal has been produced for Reading Borough Council by the Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee, set up to advise Reading Borough Council in regards to conservation areas, and in conjunction with the local Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association (BSANA) Conservation Streets Committee.

In accordance with recommendations by Historic England, the field work has been carried out using the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit and engaging with local community groups and representatives.

The Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area was last appraised in 2004 by the Council's external consultants *The Conservation Studio* of Cirencester. Their report dated April 2004 was formally adopted by the Council at that time. Much of the observation in that report remains relevant today, and is restated in the greater detail of this appraisal and its recommendations. Positively, with this analysis, there has been an increase in public awareness of what is significant in our architectural heritage and worthy of conservation. Positively, there are active volunteer-led community organisations in place which the 2004 appraisal noted was a key element to drive improvements forward.

In publishing this appraisal for public consultation, the Council also acknowledges the advice and assistance of Historic England, particularly by their providing, in February and April of 2016, training workshops in Conservation Area appraisal for Council officers and local community representatives who would be taking part in the appraisal process.

This appraisal acknowledges that the Conservation Area was placed on Historic England's listing of "Heritage at Risk" at the end of 2017. As well as providing detail on the historic and architectural interest of the Conservation Area, it highlights those issues that have resulted in this designation and which accordingly need to be managed. The appraisal concludes with detailed recommendations for boundary changes and a management plan aimed at removing the Conservation Area from this "at Risk" status and better protecting and enhancing the character of the Conservation Area in the years ahead.



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Statement of Special Interest

SS1 Introduction

The Conservation Area is notable for its diverse but representative collection of urban, domestic English architectural styles dating from the Georgian period through the Victorian and Edwardian periods and in more modest amounts later 20th century infill. With its range of wealthy to more modest examples of each of these periods, the Conservation Area forms an microcosm of Reading's residential building during these periods.

The Conservation Area illustrates the emergence of a street pattern as the agricultural lands bordering Castle Hill and the Oxford Road to the west of the medieval town centre of Reading were progressively developed: first, as an elegant suburb for members of the town's elite and later with infill streets of terraced housing for employees of Reading's new manufacturing industries whose rapid growth had been made possible by the arrival of the railway.

Reading's proud heritage of brick, tile and terracotta manufacturing is exemplified in each of five separately distinctive character areas:

- **Castle Street/Castle Hill** - dominated by large Georgian housing and trees. (Section 6.1)
- **Oxford Road**- a half- mile long "regular mix" of Georgian terraced housing and Victorian retail frontages.
- **Russell Street and streets east**-well-noted for its large single-family Victorian and Georgian terraces.
- **Streets west of Russell Street**- striking views to the Caversham escarpment and a mix of low- rise residential from fine and humble Georgian properties to polychrome brick artisan terraces.
- **Castle Crescent and streets south of Castle Hill**- dominated by late Victorian villas mixed with early Georgian housing.

Each of these character areas are reviewed in detail in this study and this reasoning is set out and justified within this appraisal.

SS2 Significance and Key Positive Features

- The Conservation Area developed as an area of intense residential housing centred along the two early medieval routes out of Reading to the west: the Bath Road route of Castle Street and Castle Hill and the Oxford Road leading towards Pangbourne and Oxford.
- This progressive development and infill of Reading's early market gardens is evident from the layout of the first north-south connector roads of Russell Street and Prospect Street.
- The Conservation Area is a microcosm of Reading's residential building styles in a concentrated area; spanning high end and more modest examples from the 18th century to the 20th century. It encompasses a range of Georgian villas, terraces, and artisan housing, large Victorian single-family terraces, polychrome brick two-up, two-down houses to large Victorian and Edwardian villas.
- The area boasts a good number of listed houses mainly concentrated along Castle Hill/Castle Street, Russell Street and the Oxford Road but also throughout the area.
- Buildings of Townscape Merit, which vary from unlisted terraces to cottages, lend the unique character to each of the Conservation Area's character areas.
- Large Georgian villas and terraces are concentrated along Castle Street/Castle Hill, Coley Hill, the Oxford Road and Russell Street signifying the early move by the more affluent to the west of the town to take advantage of the 'salubrious air' away from local industry. The extensive use of Reading's local brick industry is exemplified in polychrome brick, tiles and terracotta throughout the area seen throughout the different domestic periods.

- The views north from several vantage points to the Caversham escarpment and leafy hills highlight the geographical location of the area set atop a large clay and chalk escarpment that the early Bath Road climbed through Reading.
- The view south along Coley Avenue and its allée of trees in place along the road for over 200 years is protected as a significant heritage view of Reading.
- A number of mature trees (largely along Coley Avenue, Castle Street/Castle Hill and the Bath Road) create a positive green impact and are protected by TPOs (Tree Protection Orders). The proud religious legacy of the area is manifest in: the c.1826 parish church of the Holy Trinity, the only purpose-built synagogue in Berkshire on Goldsmid Road and in a number of surviving historic non-conformist chapels and places of worship throughout the area.
- 55 Baker Street was the site of "The Reading Establishment" studio of William "Fox" Talbot, an early photography pioneer. It was there the first mass-produced book with photographs; "The Pencil of Nature," was manufactured.
- The grade II* King's Arms Inn at 154-160 Castle Hill which throughout its life served as an inn, a refuge for French priests during the French Revolution and was home to the local Jesse family of developers throughout the 19th century is a prominent area landmark.
- The striking streetscape of Jesse Terrace, built by the local Jesse family, is distinguished by well-proportioned terraces on both sides with decorative cast iron verandas.
- Yeomanry House, alongside Castle Hill, with its intact gatehouse, front garden and drive and 2 Bath Road remain as two examples of the large "gentlemen's residences" for Reading's elite 19c society that once populated the apex of Castle Hill. Oxford Road Community School is an attractive, listed Victorian school and well-used by the local community.

SS3 Issues and vulnerabilities

While there are some areas which are well maintained and easily appreciable from an historical and architectural viewpoint, there are several challenged streets and areas that have led to the Area's recent inclusion on Historic England's "Heritage at Risk" list (November 2019). The current condition of buildings ranges from poor to well-restored and maintained. Nevertheless, the area's historical interest as a microcosm of Reading's 19c building styles speaks for its retention and for the expansion of the 2004 boundaries to capture the flavour of each character area.

Recently, many parts of the Conservation Area have suffered from insensitive renovations and poor management, largely a result of intensified, occasionally insensitive investment in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) which are not always well-maintained. There has also been insensitive management of the public realm, such as resurfacing pavements with tarmac and out-of-keeping modern street lighting replacements. The impacts of these issues are most apparent along the Oxford Road and in the streets east of Russell Street.

However, there remain many buildings and architectural details of interest and significance throughout the Conservation Area. It is hoped that the 'at Risk' listing by Historic England will galvanise the Council and local community cooperation in reversing the blight, enabling the special character of the area to be more appreciated, protected and enhanced.

Negative Issues and vulnerabilities:

- On-going degradation of property façades with the loss of historic features and detailing such as traditional doors and windows, roofing materials, and façade treatments. This is frequently the result of intense, occasionally insensitive buy-to-let investment in the local HMO market, most noticeable along Oxford Road, Waylen Street, Zinzan Street, Howard Street, Anstey Street, Body Road, Prospect Street, Carey Street, the north end of Russell Street and sections of Baker Street.

- Architecturally unsympathetic extensions and alterations including poor quality dormers, loss of chimney stacks and chimney pots and the loss of front walls onto streets.
- The blighting effects of on-going population intensification resulting in excessive overhead telecom wires, satellite dishes, redundant and unkempt wiring and pipes along property façades.
- Persistent rubbish management issues result in the loss of front boundary walls for rubbish bin hard standings, excessive bins in front gardens and on pavements and frequent fly-tipping.
- The intense use and ongoing replacement of original windows and doors with modern uPVC substitutes on both unlisted and listed properties alters façades negatively.
- A continual imbalance of the traditional societal and community structure of the area, with single-person households within HMO and flat conversions exceeding those houses which were traditionally single-family homes.
- Out-of-character retail signage in poor condition or quality, with garish or unsympathetic colours, lighting or styling blighting the Oxford Road.
- Non-policy compliant and excessive estate agent signage degrades the area.
- Poor condition of the public realm with proliferation of bins on pavements, excessive or redundant street signage, unsympathetic street furniture and modern street lighting inappropriate to a conservation area setting.
- Poor condition of the historic environment along the Oxford Road, including inappropriate glass and metal shopfront conversions and metal roller security screens.
- Out-of-keeping modern infill –primarily on the north side of the Oxford Road but also along the west sides of Field Road and Coley Hill and “opportunities for enhancements” throughout the area with redevelopment or improvements.
- Poor quality tarmac pavements and roads detracting from the historic setting.
- Persistent crime and ASB in parts of the Conservation Area creates a lack-of-desirability for positive investment and reduces its attraction for some residents and families.
- Continued resourcing challenges to the Local Planning Authority in terms of enforcement and Article 4 creation that could improve the Conservation Area.
- High levels of traffic along the major historic thoroughfares of the Oxford Road and Castle Street/Castle Hill.
- Lack of green on many of the area's streets.

SS4 Recommended measures

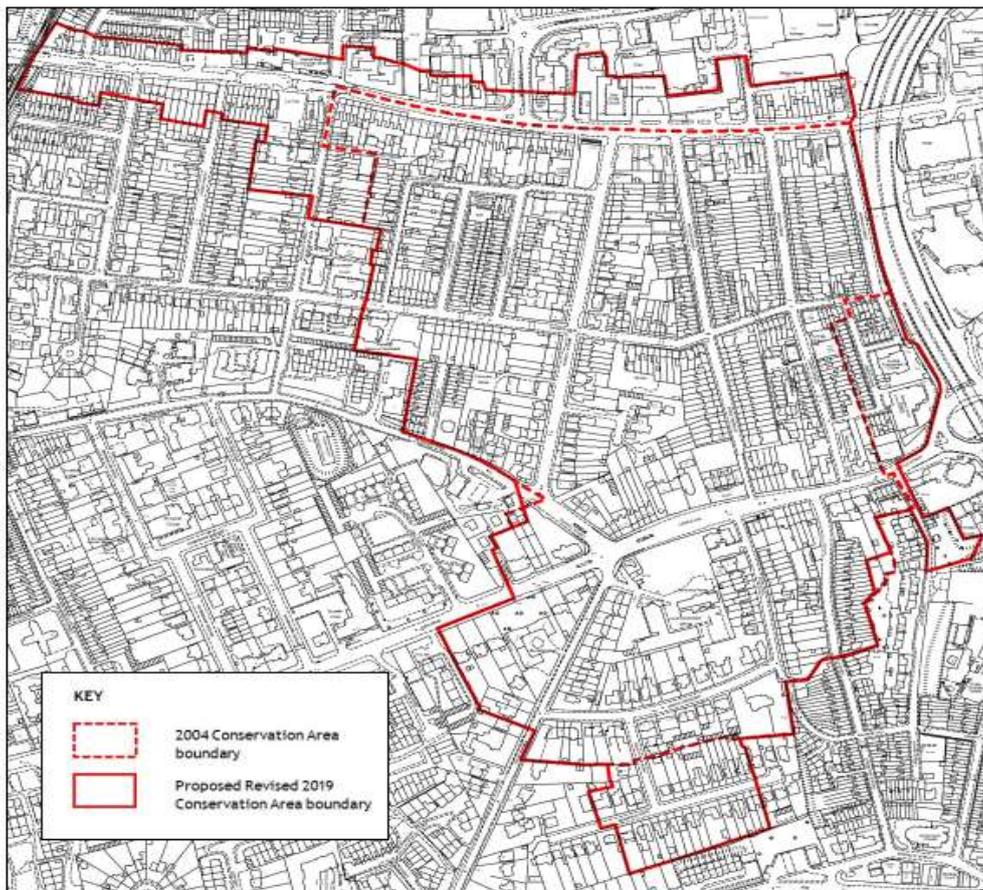
Historic England advises that the successful care, protection and enhancement of Conservation Areas cannot be provided by the local Council alone; it also needs the active goodwill and co-operation of landowners and the local community in order to be successful. The 2004 Appraisal reiterated this. Several key strides have been taken in this area with the creation of the Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) in 2015 and the Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association (BSANA) in 2012 to the benefit of the Conservation Area.

Accordingly, in sections 8, detailed recommended measures aimed at the reduction of further harm to the Conservation Area and to encourage its enhancement and regeneration are reviewed. However, the over- arching measures are recapped in brief here with further detailing in Section 8:

- **A change of name to the Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area** This would acknowledge the historical importance and actual development structure of the area.

- **Seeking funding for improvements to the public realm, streetscapes and properties** The area has issues that are beyond the scope of present resourcing and voluntary contributions. Funding is necessary to grapple with the larger issues present.
- **Establishing management plans with the Council and community groups** The 2004 appraisal and Historic England acknowledge the essential cooperation between the LPA and community groups in the care management and improvement of at Risk Conservation Areas.
- **An expansion of Article 4 Directions with Local Development Orders (LDOs)** Such daisy-chained policies are the leading tool for the rescue of conservation areas where there has been a noticeable and continuing loss of character.

SS5 The 2019 Boundary adjustment



KEY	
	2004 Conservation Area boundary
	Proposed Revised 2019 Conservation Area boundary

CASTLE HILL—OXFORD ROAD CONSERVATION AREA

Map 1 Proposed Conservation Area Boundary

February 2019

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After careful review of the existing boundary of the Conservation Area, taking into account feedback from the public consultation process and a detailed study of each of the character areas within the Conservation Area, the following extensions to the Conservation Area

boundary are proposed as shown on the map below. Areas in the proposed extensions are marked by a dotted outline and a star:

- **The inclusion of 78 to 190 Oxford Road (evens) on the north side from Alfred Street to the railway bridge and the inclusion of 205 to 283 Oxford Road (odds) on the south side of the Oxford Road from Prospect Street to the railway bridge. The inclusion of 1 to 23 Prospect Street (odds) and 2 to 14 (evens) Prospect Street.**

The largest extension proposed within the appraisal is along the Oxford Road, expanding the 2004 boundary that runs down the centre of the road between the IDR and Prospect Street. The extension includes all properties fronting Oxford Road along both sides between the Inner Distribution Road (IDR) and the Reading West railway bridge.

The historical importance justifies the extension as the Oxford Road is one of the two major routes to the west out of the town centre, from which the infill residential streets of the area were developed. The special and varied early to mid-19th century character of the Oxford Road extends to the railway bridge which defines a clear architectural demarcation between the 'regular variety' mix of the Georgian and Victorian built environment to the east and the later housing and shops beyond it which is devoid of Georgian built structure.

Along this half mile stretch of the Oxford Road, a substantial proportion of the properties were built prior to 1833, and the route contains 40 listed properties. * These factors reinforce the high value of this road both to Reading's history and the history of the area.

This proposed boundary change denotes a significant change from the 2004 appraisal in terms of understanding the Conservation Area itself and how the Oxford Road is an integral element of the area.

Additionally, one of the first two connector roads from Oxford Road to the south was Prospect Street which was integral to the development of the grid system of residential streets laid out over the 19th century. 1-9 Prospect Street is a rare Georgian terrace of workers' cottages c.1820s, and part of the pattern of speculative housing development that extended from the Oxford Road. Along with Prospect Mews, their contrast with the large houses of Sidney Terrace to the north aids in the understanding of early housing for labourers and artisans in the area. The larger houses from 11-23 are also part of that earlier development phase and built prior to 1833. On the west side of the street, the larger Edwardian semi-detached houses have attractive polychrome brick and terracotta embellishments and give a sense of balance to both sides of the street essential in proper conservation area designation and management.

(listed individually or as part of a group.)*

- **Re-inclusion of Body Road, Anstey Road and 3 to 11 Baker Street.**

These properties were removed from the Conservation Area at the last appraisal in 2004 based upon a loss of original windows, doors and front boundaries along with the detrimental presence of satellite dishes and insertion of modern buildings. However, the area is to be re-included as the housing terrace's period character is now more widely understood and appreciated within the complete picture of the residential development in the Conservation Area. As early Edwardian artisan housing, it forms an integral component of the Conservation Area's complete housing history, substantiating it as a complete microcosm of Reading's residential housing history.

The removal of this area from the Conservation Area in 2004 confused and weakened the understanding of a natural eastern boundary line to the Conservation Area. The boundary line is easily understood geographically along the IDR corridor and the re-establishment of this area as without its inclusion, the wider Conservation Area can be considered at risk of adverse development. The modern buildings provide a greatly appreciated feeling of space to the area and these modern sites present 'opportunities for enhancement' as and when they come to be redeveloped.

The 2004 appraisal noted that a good working relationship with residents was needed in the area. Since the last appraisal the Council has supported the creation and development of the Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association (BSANA) and the area lies within their remit. As a result, improved private property maintenance and public realm care in this area has been achieved, along with fostering a greater appreciation for the area.

- **Re-inclusion of 1 to 15 Castle Street (Castle Gate flats) and the green space at the northwest corner of the Castle Street/IDR roundabout; plus the inclusion of 3 to 7 Coley Place (odds); plus the inclusion of the open park area to the south of those houses along Coley Place.**

The Castle Gate flats were removed in the 2004 appraisal along with Anstey Road and Body Road. The necessity to re-include the Castle Gate flats and the green space on the southwestern side of the Castle Street roundabout again reduces confusion about the Conservation Area's "natural" and "understood" boundary line and greatly aids establishing and confirming a proper "gateway" to the Conservation Area from the town centre. This entrance into the Conservation Area figures significantly in the views in and out of the Conservation Area. (Views 6A and 6B)

Furthermore, it reduces the risk of future development to that part of the area immediately to the west of the IDR roundabout which might be inappropriate to the Conservation Area in terms of height or massing.

The small terrace of houses at 3-7 Coley Place perched along the edge of the steep chalk escarpment, are a key element of an important and noted view from Castle Street (view 17). The houses, once part of a longer terrace, are the only surviving examples of early mansard roofs in the Conservation Area and, as such, their simple artisan style contrasts well with the grander houses of Castle Street.

The inclusion of the green space to the south of 3-7 Coley Place that hugs the edge of the escarpment shows clearly the topographical restrictions around which the area developed. While difficult to build on, as an improved park area, the space could be improved to be a valued green asset to the area.

- **Inclusion of 2 to 28 Mansfield Road (evens) 1 to 29 Mansfield Road (odds); 1,2,3 Coley Park Road**

This extension acknowledges that the houses of Mansfield Road are part of the same late 19th century development phase as Castle Crescent and thus have many similarities in styling and original purpose. Only the houses from this development period are included. The high brick walls of Coley Park Road between the two streets form a pleasant connector road and the brick walls, are worthy of preservation.

Conservation Area Appraisal

1. Introduction

The purpose of an appraisal document is to ensure that the special interest justifying designation of the conservation area is clearly defined and analysed in a written statement of its character and appearance. This provides a sound basis, defensible on appeal, for development plan policies and development control decisions, and also forms the basis for further work on design guidance and enhancement proposals. The Historic England Good Practice Advice Note on the Historic Environment in Local Plans clarifies advice as given by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for the management of conservation areas as designated heritage assets. It notes that the NPPF states that planning should '... conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations'. It further states that local planning authorities within their Local Plan framework should '... have up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area and use it to assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to the environment'. This appraisal is charged with providing the up-to-date evidence as needed for the establishment of the Local Plan in regard to the management of the fifteen Conservation Areas within Reading.

This appraisal describes and defines the particular historical and architectural character and interest of the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area, highlighting those features of its character and appearance that should be preserved or enhanced and identifying negative features that detract from the Area's character and appearance, and issues that may affect it in future.

1.1 Policy Context

The purpose of an appraisal document is to ensure that the special interest justifying designation of the conservation area is clearly defined and analysed in a written statement of its character and appearance. This provides a sound basis, defensible on appeal, for development plan policies and development control decisions, and also forms the basis for further work on design guidance and enhancement proposals.

This Appraisal describes and defines the particular historical and architectural character and interest of the St Peters Conservation Area, highlighting those features of its character and appearance that should be preserved or enhanced and identifying negative features that detract from the area's character and appearance, and issues that may affect it in future.

The Historic England Good Practice Advice Note on the Historic Environment in Local Plans clarifies advice as given by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for the management of conservation areas as designated heritage assets. It notes that the NPPF states that planning should '... conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations'. It further states that local planning authorities within their Local Plan framework should '... have up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area and use it to assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to the environment'. This Appraisal is charged with providing the up-to-date evidence as needed for the establishment of the Local Plan in regard to the management of the fifteen Conservation Areas within Reading.

1.2 Sustainable development in conservation areas

The government has outlined a presumption in favour of sustainable development and clarifies the purpose of the planning system in achieving these goals. Sustainable development must, amongst other things, perform a role in protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic

environment. In relation to conservation areas the NPPF states: 'Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance and better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.' This means that proposals that fail to fulfil these requirements should not be accepted and the NPPF explains that where a proposal involves harm to a designated heritage asset, it should only be allowed if the public benefit of the proposal outweighs the harm.

In order to make these judgements clear with accuracy, evidence must be laid out detailing the importance of the historical, heritage and cultural significance of the conservation area and its assets. This Appraisal provides that evidence, in as reasonably detailed manner as possible.

This Appraisal cannot hope to mention every building or feature within the Conservation Area that might be of value. Any omission should not be taken to imply that it is not of any interest or value to the character of the area.

This appraisal serves to advise the implementation of policy guidelines as established by the Historic England Good Practice Guides for the Historic Environment and the Setting of Heritage Assets which have been put in place to support the NPPF of March 2012. It provides the needed background advice for the maintenance and delivery of a sustainable historic spatial vision for the area and to justify the protection and enhancement of the area. It defines the qualities and local distinctiveness that provide baseline evidence for the development of local policy with Local Plan documents, Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and Article 4 (2) directions as needed.

Its description of the area further lays out the background evidence needed for enforcement and also serves to advise investment and development within the area. It is meant to aid in informing proposals for new development and provide the solid evidence necessary on which to base the determination of planning applications, either for new development or alterations to the existing historical fabric.

1.3 Policy changes and the new Local Plan

2017 was the 50th anniversary of the Civic Amenities Act of 1967 which created conservation areas in the UK. Budgets for planning departments now face their greatest financial challenge since the implementation of that Act and thus greater challenges in being able to meet the lofty ideals for the development of conservation areas set out in 1967.

The Council's statutory duty under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is to identify those parts of their area that are considered to contribute positively to ... special historic or architectural interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' and to designate these as conservation areas. The Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area was formally designated on 1974 following a period of public consultation. The 1990 Act further requires the Council to have 'special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the area' when exercising its function as a local planning authority. Unlike listed buildings, conservation areas are not assessed against national criteria standards.

In accordance with the NPPF and guidance standards set forth by Historic England, the Local Planning Authority sets its own standards within its Local Plan guidelines for how their conservation areas are to be maintained, protected and enhanced. Historic England recommends a re-evaluation of a conservation area once every five years. This conservation area has not been reappraised since 2004, and is overdue for reappraisal. Much has changed since then in terms of policy on a national and local level. National planning policy changed in 2013 with the introduction of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act. This replaced Conservation Area Consent with a requirement for planning permission for the demolition of a building in a conservation area.

Locally, the Reading Core Strategy was adopted as policy in 2008, the Reading Central Area Action Plan followed in 2009, and finally the Sites and Detailed Policies Document was adopted in 2012. At the time of writing, the maintenance of the Conservation Area is set out in the Core Strategy Plan adopted in 2008 which was last altered in January 2015. Certain SPD's (Supplementary Planning Documents) such as the Residential Conversions SPD and the Sites and Detailed Policies SPD aid in the implementation of the Core Strategy plan.

Proactively, in the Spring of 2016, the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee of Reading Borough Council, following national policy guidance, advised the creation of the Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC), which is a non-statutory body formed of conservation sector professionals and other interested individuals throughout Reading to advise on the overall protection and enhancement of Conservation Areas in Reading.

It is expected that Reading Borough Council will adopt a new version of its Local Plan in 2019 which in terms of conservation areas and the historic environment, will be the overarching document that informs the Council on the management of Reading's fifteen Conservation

Areas. It is anticipated that this document will enhance and make more specific policy provisions in the fulfilment of the Council's statutory duties in regard to the protection and enhancement of conservation areas.

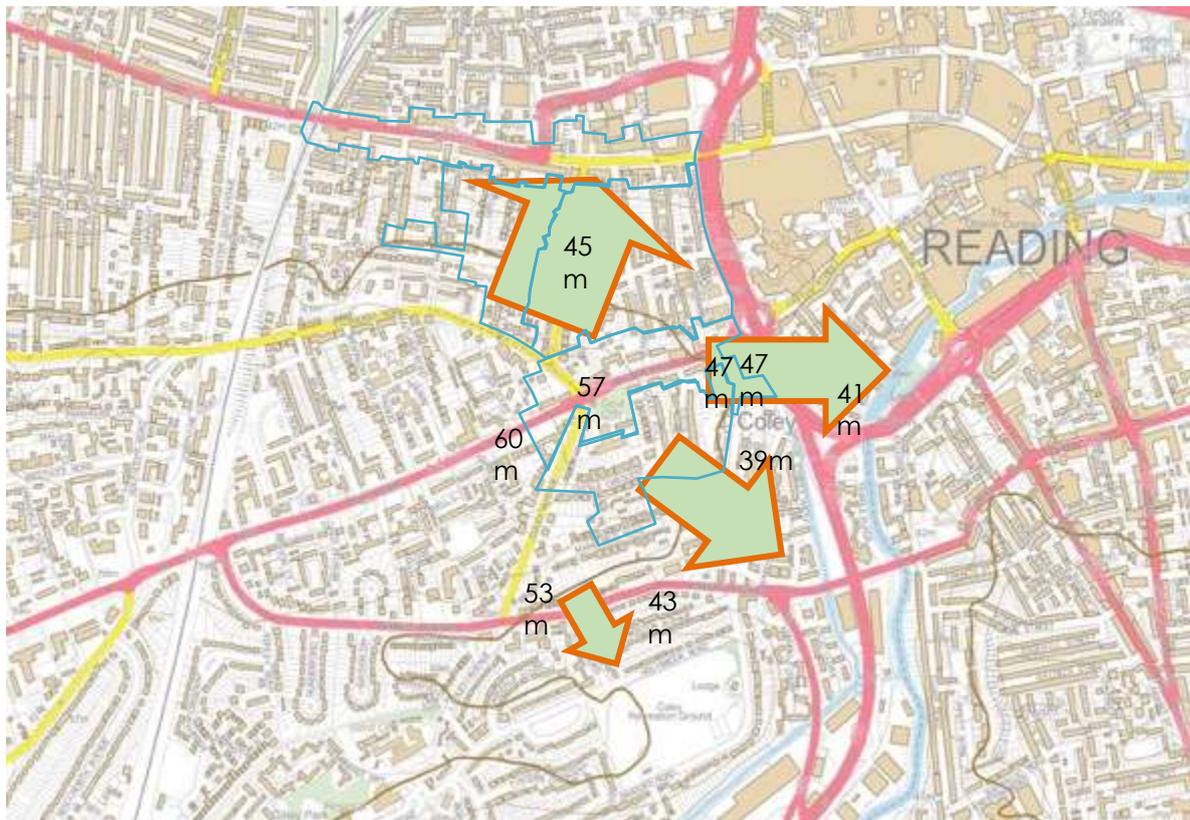
1.4 Public Consultation

This appraisal has been prepared by the Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) in association with the Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association (BSANA) and has engaged in numerous public consultations since 2016, engaging with residents, businesses and other stakeholders in the area. Extensive discussions have also been had with Reading Borough Council and Historic England in identifying and defining what continues to be of special significance and worthy of protection and/or enhancement.

In March 2016, following a two-day appraisal training workshop, sponsored and led by Historic England, an initial informal public consultation event was held in the Russell Street Castle Hill Conservation Area. Following an illustrated presentation on how to use the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit, a team of local residents and other stakeholders carried out a visual audit of every street in the Conservation Area along with others in the area that were to be considered for possible inclusion. This was a useful exercise in terms of gathering the opinions of the local community about the area. This original evaluation information was compiled into a detailed spread sheet that formed the basis of the analysis and the findings in this appraisal. Further detail of the public consultation can be found in Appendix 5.

Throughout the subsequent three years, informal consultation has continued to take place with local residents, members of the CAAC and the local Civic Society to evaluate and take on board residents' and heritage expert's opinions. Heritage Open Days saw tours of the area given and opinions were also gathered at that time.

2. Landscape Setting



Topographical map of the Conservation Area, showing how the land falls away from the high point at the Castle Hill, Coley Avenue and Bath Road intersection.

The Conservation Area lies alongside and between two historic routes leading westwards out from the medieval core of Reading, namely the old roads to Bath and to Oxford. In the 19th century the area formed the primary western entrance into the town centre.

The underlying geology consists of clay, silt and sand over chalk at the top that erodes away and is detailed further in Appendix 2.

The top of Castle Hill, at the intersection with Russell Street and Coley Avenue, is the highest point in the Conservation Area. To the north, the long, wide slope of Russell Street leads down the low hill to the parish church of Holy Trinity and the Oxford Road with its mix of shops and residential buildings. To the south west, Coley Avenue, lined with trees, leads down to Berkeley Avenue in the south. To the south Castle Crescent, Mansfield Road and Coley Hill sit on the high flat portion of the high mound of clay which slopes rapidly away towards the beds of the Holy Brook and the River Kennet below.

2.1 Setting within surrounding area

The Conservation Area comprises the first residential neighbourhood area to the west of the town centre after crossing the IDR. Prior to the development of the IDR it was more connected to the town but is now separated from it, and forms its own distinct neighbourhood area sharply contrasting with the new tall towers of Chatham Place to the north.

There is still a perceptible link between Castle Street in the town centre and Castle Street on the conservation area side of the IDR, which becomes Castle Hill towards the top of the hill near the intersection with the Bath Road and Coley Avenue. The end of the street closest to the IDR still retains its Castle Street name. Howard Street is an example of the streets that were

demolished to its east to make way for the IDR in the late 1960s. The east side of the street was demolished and the row of trees shielding the street from the IDR stands where the houses were once on the east side of the street.

The area is primarily within Abbey Ward but also reaches into Minster Ward south of Castle Hill/ Castle Street and into Battle Ward past Prospect Street. It is defined geographically and historically by its major east-west routes: along the north by the Oxford Road and the south by Castle Hill/Castle Street. Residential housing lies in between the two and to the south of Castle Hill.

The styling of the late 19th century, Victorian, polychrome brick, two-up two-down, terraced housing in Clifton Street and Franklin Street continues westward along the residential streets off Oxford Road out to the Norcot roundabout.

To the west of the Conservation Area, between Tilehurst Road and the Bath Road is the late Victorian planned street development that comprises the Downshire Square Conservation Area. The two conservation areas come close to touching along the Tilehurst Road. That area is one of attractive grand polychrome brick villas in the late Victorian, and early Edwardian style, built in the late 1800s to early 1900s.

Directly to the west and just north of Downshire Square, the streets of Brunswick Hill, Argyle Street and Lorne Street have a variety of houses from the early to late 19th century that are attractively set and potentially deserving of some future protection, possibly by inclusion into a conservation area. The area was seriously considered for inclusion into this conservation area, but such action would have made the conservation area even larger and unmanageable.

The area to the southeast of Castle Crescent and Mansfield Road is an interesting area of small terraced cottages mixed in with impressive polychrome brick villas. It is another area that could be analysed for its value as a potential conservation area, possibly being incorporated in the Castle Crescent/ Mansfield Road area.

Coley Avenue progresses out to the south and west from its intersection with Castle Hill and is notable for its allée of tree species of which lined the avenue, once the drive to the former Coley Park Estate, prior to the 18th century. (Coates' map 1802).

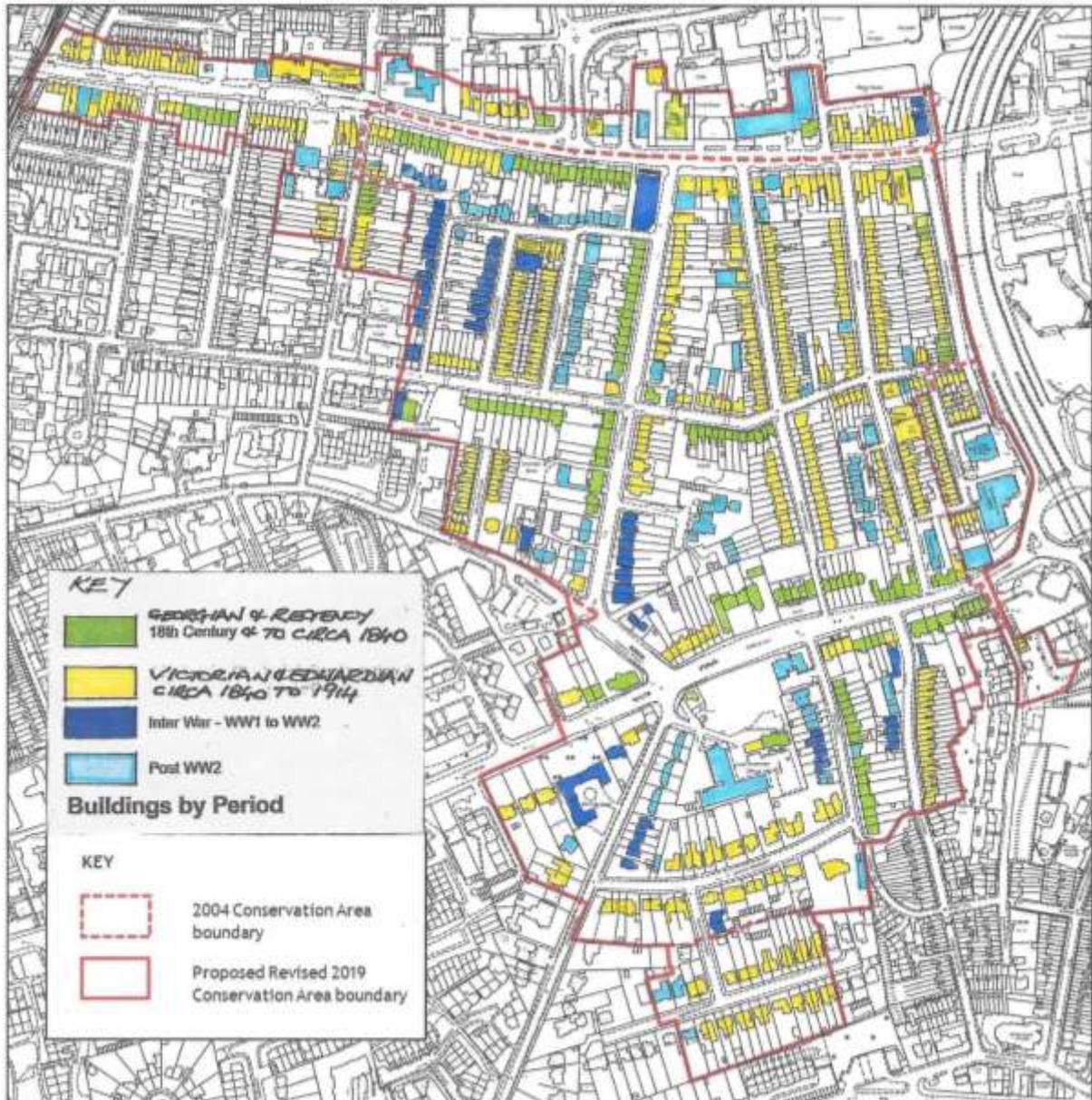
3. History of the Area

3.1 Archaeological heritage

Although legend places a Norman castle on the south side of Castle Hill, there has been limited evidence of archaeological significance in the area. Actual finds are recorded in the Historic Environment Record, held by the Borough Council.

However, any below-ground work carries the possibility of further discoveries, so all applications for such work should be referred to the Council's advisory archaeologist to consider the need for archaeological investigation before work proceeds.

3.2 Development History of the Area



Buildings within the Conservation Area by period

Castle Hill and Oxford Road are historic radial routes from the town centre, and a scatter of buildings developed along them from the 18th century, some of which survive as important elements in the Conservation Area.

The area between them was largely open until the early 19th century, when Russell St and Prospect St were developed as suburbs of mostly large terraced properties, to be followed by the development of remaining areas as terraced housing. These areas, with sections of plain and polychrome brickwork give the Conservation Area its essential character and mark it out as an area worthy of protection.

The 20th and 21st centuries have been less kind to the area. The IDR substantially severed the area from the town centre and the area has become one where single-family houses have been progressively adapted to multiple occupation residences. This has resulted in: unsympathetic alterations; pressures on traffic and parking; unsightly bin storage; satellite dishes and social problems. These factors have somewhat affected the appetite for

sympathetic investment in the area. These issues are covered more fully in Section 7, on Negative Features.

A full account of the area's rich history is at Appendix 1, which also includes more detailed history of each Character Area, of which there are five within the Conservation Area as a whole.

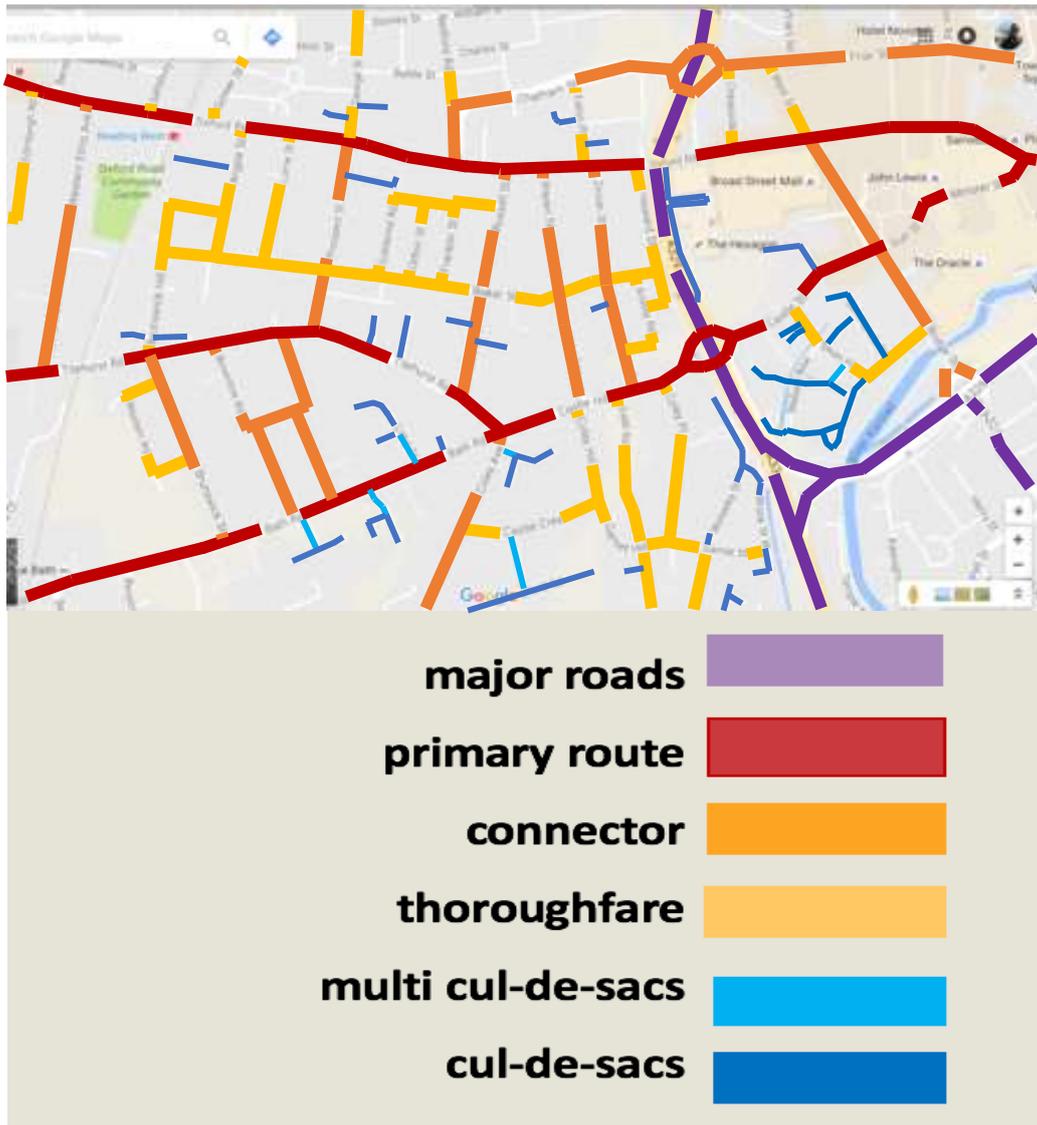
The Character Area analyses in Section 6 highlight those aspects of each individual character area's history which are visible in its current character, and which should therefore be taken into account in decisions about change.

4. Spatial Analysis

4.1 Key characteristics and Plan form

Key characteristics of the conservation area include:

- It is the first residential development west of the town centre commenced in the late 18th century and continuing into the 19th century.
- Individual large Georgian and early Victorian villas (Yeomanry House and No. 2 Bath Road) are set back from the wide road in grounds with some surviving mature trees still show evidence of large "prestige villas" that were situated at the top of Castle Hill at its junction with Bath Road.
- The streets south of Castle Hill have early 19th century Georgian terraces of two and three storey houses in Coley Hill and detached and semi-detached houses in their own gardens in Castle Crescent. There is a large detached villa in its own grounds at No. 3 Castle Crescent, a former vicarage (currently undergoing restoration and development).
- There are substantial Georgian terraces of three storey houses along Castle Hill with front gardens of varying size.
- Buildings or sites of former coaching inns on the route to Bath survive: The Kings Arms Inn with late 17th century and 18th century origins at 154-160 Castle Hill set which is now private housing, the Horse and Jockey now The Castle Tap at 120 Castle Street (first recorded 1699, rebuilt 1823).
- Russell Street (c.1815-1825) laid out on the eastern boundary of former market gardens is a wide main thoroughfare linking Castle Hill to the Oxford Road. There are substantial three storey Georgian terraced villas on the west side facing later three storey Victorian villas and terraces on the east side.
- Baker Street, one of the earliest streets in the conservation area, has smaller Georgian terraced houses in the section east of Russell Street and a well-preserved red brick early Georgian terrace of substantial two storey houses with basements to the west of that junction.
- Oxford Road has a combination of diverse but frequently poorly maintained shop fronts in both early Georgian and Victorian buildings. The Oxford Road Community School, listed Grade II, was built between 1880-3 by local architects Morris and Smallwood. It is largely original with some modern additions.
- The streets to the east of Russell Street between the Oxford Road and Castle Hill (Waylen Street, Zinzan Street, Howard Street, Carey Street and Jesse Terrace) are fairly wide with sizeable brick two to three storey houses (mid- to late 19th century). Jesse Terrace is the best preserved, most attractive single street within the Conservation Area.



Road categories within and surrounding the Conservation Area

The layout of the Conservation Area results from the 18th and 19th century development of a residential area first along the two major medieval westbound routes from the town centre and followed later by infill streets in a grid pattern on the site of former market gardens between the two routes: the current Oxford Road extending to Tilehurst Road towards Pangbourne and Oxford and the route west along Castle Hill/Castle Street to the Bath Road.

- Prospect Street and Howard Lane (now Howard Street) are the very earliest north-south connector roads between the two primary routes. Prospect Street was laid out by William Pratt Swallow and ran from the Oxford Road south uphill towards Pigs Green Lane (now Tilehurst Road). Howard Lane ran from the Oxford Road to Back Lane (parts of which became Baker Street) which in turn led into the town centre along Hosier Street.
- Russell Street (also developed by Mr. Swallow) and Baker Street were laid out c. 1815-1825 as housing began to be built on the two roads. The bend along Baker Street between Waylen Street and Russell Street shows how Baker Street joined up with the earlier layout of the former Back Lane which continued towards the town into Hosier Street.

- Waylen Street and Zinzan Street took shape c. 1830-40, as infill roads within the emerging residential area.
- The Oxford Road was formerly referred to as Oxford Street as it emerged from the town centre up to the intersection of Russell Street, and was named as such on the 1853 Sanitation Map of Reading. The Oxford Road remains a primary route out of the centre to the west and is still heavily utilised by both pedestrian and vehicular traffic. It has a distinctively different character from the remainder of the Conservation Area. It is defined by both its busy use and its diversity of cultures, which is reflected in the shops lining the main road.
- Castle Hill forms the western section of Castle Street as the main road west out of the town centre extending from the minster church of St. Mary the Virgin in The Butts. The entire road was called Castle Street until the section west of Jesse Terrace was renamed Castle Hill at some time between 1870 and 1890. Castle Street/Castle Hill remains as it has been historically; a primary route for traffic in and out of the town centre. The heavy traffic today is further exacerbated by the IDR's exit onto the road at the roundabout between the Conservation Area and the town centre. To a lesser degree, the road is also a pedestrian route to residential areas west of the centre. Its wide layout with large Georgian villas set back in grounds often with mature trees, still maintains a residential feel despite the traffic.
- Jesse Terrace to the north of Castle Hill and the streets leading off Castle Hill to the south have a similar character. The streets south of Castle Hill are quieter and do not have the same issues as the area between Castle Hill and the Oxford Road. The southern portion of the Conservation Area is focussed on its relationship to Castle Hill/Castle Street as a route for residents in and out of that area into the town centre.

4.2 Views into, out of and within the Conservation Area



MAP HAS SLIGHT INACCURACIES – 12 MAY 2019
Red outlined cones: Wide views out of conservation area
Yellow arrows: Views within the conservation area
Red arrows: Narrower views in and out of the conservation area

Views form a critical consideration in retaining those qualities about the conservation area that define its character and its specialness. Within Section 6, views relating to each individual character area are defined within that section.

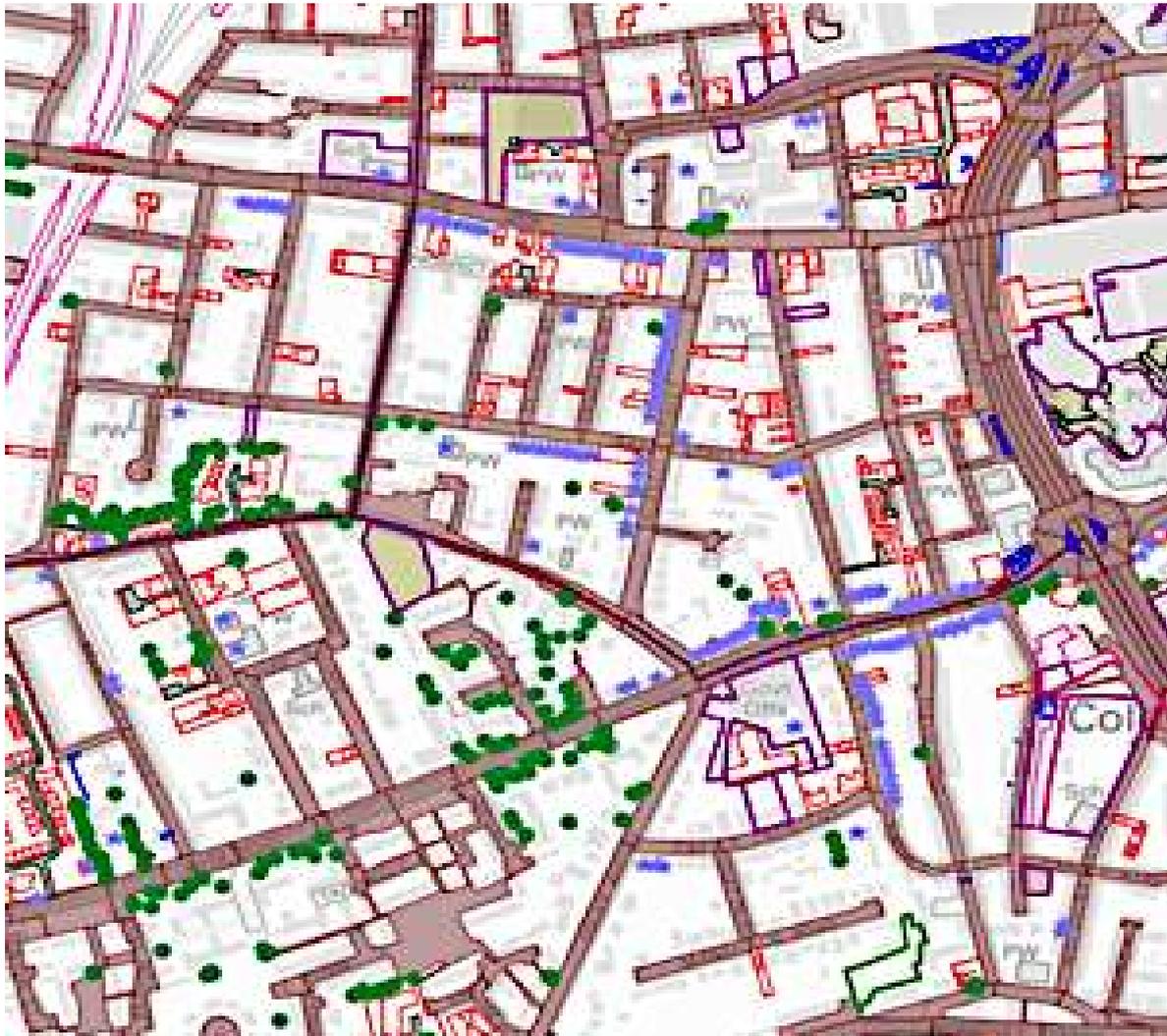


View 15: Early 19th century view of Castle Hill towards the town



View 15: Blended view of Castle Hill and Castle Street
from early 20th century with tram line overhead to today's view with the Blade in the far distance

4.3 Trees and green landscape



**Trees within the Conservation Area with “Tree Protection Orders/TPOs” (green dot) and “tree streets” with light purple dot as defined by Reading Borough Council.
map to be replaced with current high res version**

The area is primarily made up of urban streetscapes. Trees and planting figure prominently in certain parts, but most of the conservation area is considered by Reading Borough Council to have ten percent or less canopy cover; therefore, the strategy to protect and enhance green provision in the area is a priority as defined in the Council's 2010 Tree Strategy document and in line with the Council's 2019 Climate Emergency Motion.

The local Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association (BSANA) and the Council have been working proactively in locating sites where green provision for the area can be increased. This strategy has been successful in several locations in recent years, notably along Baker Street and along the Oxford Road. Green provision is warranted on other streets throughout the Conservation Area but challenges with underground wires and cables and narrow pavements create a real issue to increase green provision.

TPO trees in the area



Large TPO trees along the Bath Road

The map above outlines the properties where trees are protected by the Council's Tree Protection Orders (TPO) and also denotes significant street or public domain trees. Not having a TPO does not mean a tree in the conservation area does not merit protection.

BSANA has also been proactive in working with the Council to prevent the removal of trees which make a positive contribution to the urban landscape in the area. The system of placing a TPO on a tree is currently often a reactionary rather than a proactive measure due to Council resource limitations. Nonetheless, all trees are protected within a conservation area and require application to fell them.

If a tree is in the public domain, or owned and managed by the Council, there is no TPO on it as it is considered to be monitored and under good care. For example, the trees along Coley Avenue do not have TPOs placed on them.

Trees of the most significance to residents in the area are:

- the large Cedar of Lebanon at 154-160 Castle Hill - possibly 200 years old
- the oak tree at the corner of Goldsmid Road framing the bend in the road – c.100 years old
- the small group of trees at the front of the Holy Trinity Parish Church
- several of the large mature cypress trees along the Bath Road
- several of the mature specimens in the front garden at Yeomanry House which provide a barrier between the house and the traffic on Castle Hill.



The large Cedar of Lebanon at 154- 160 Castle Hill and other TPO trees along the road

Trees on private properties

Many of the trees which benefit the area are on privately owned properties. The most notable green canopies in the Conservation Area are those fronting properties along the Bath Road, and along Castle Hill.

There are several trees currently being considered for TPOs fronting the Yeomanry House site, as the Council has recently liquidated the property.

Many back gardens on the terraced streets have smaller trees which contribute to the overall green canopy in the area and are protected from immediate felling.

Trees in the public domain

There are a number of trees within the public domain which contribute to the overall green canopy cover and green space within the area. Those within the public domain which have a positive effect on the conservation area are mainly in the southern part of the conservation area: Coley Avenue, the Bath Road and along Castle Hill.

The avenue of trees along Howard Street forms an essential barrier to the traffic noise from the IDR for Howard Street and Body Road.

The trees in raised planters along Body Road are poorly maintained. Improvements to that area need to be made for greater public use and enjoyment. Trees in the public domain at

the south east corner of the conservation area at the IDR intersection with Castle Street are also suffering from neglect.

The historic allée of trees along Coley Avenue is a very important contributor to the overall green canopy of the southern part of the conservation area. The substantial mature tree canopy at the beginning of the Bath Road enhances the view west from the top of Castle Hill.



Views 4a and 4b: Fox Talbot's photograph of the allée of trees along Coley Avenue

It is hoped that the newer trees planted by the Council along the Oxford Road and along Baker Street will bring a much greener feel to those roads as the trees mature.

Green parks and open green spaces



The historical, open front garden space in front of Yeomanry House

Green space is at a premium within the Conservation Area and whilst there are small green areas proposed for inclusion at the corner of Castle Street and the IDR, along the escarpment at Coley Place and a small grouping of trees at Body Road, there are no public parks or gardens within the conservation area.

Creative redevelopment of the area near Body Road could make a small green space more beneficial to the neighbourhood instead of being an area subject to antisocial behaviour.

Open green spaces which are private are equally rare, and two of those are owned by local churches. The area of grass and shrubs at the Carey Centre near Body Road provides an essential oasis of green for the immediate area, despite the fact it is for private use by the Carey Baptist Church.

The grounds surrounding the National Spiritualist Church at 81 Baker Street, form the garden of York Lodge, the early 19th century house which the church now occupies. It is a welcome green open space in Baker Street but it too is for the private use of the Church.

The front garden of Yeomanry House is within the curtilage of the site recently sold and being redeveloped into a nursery. This land in front of Yeomanry House was noted in the appraisal in 2004, as forming a much-needed green space for the area that at the time was at least publically accessible, although never an official “public open space.” The garden is important to retain in terms of its historical relationship to Yeomanry House’s original layout.

The large front gardens of the terrace of houses at 134-144 Castle Hill together with the front gardens of Jesse Terrace contribute significantly to the green space in the area.

5. Buildings and public realm

5.1 Key positive characteristics

The conservation area’s strength lies in the variety of its built environment, offering the observer a range of housing styles from the late 18c to the early 20c in a relatively small area.

The area built up to respond to the rapidly changing domestic needs of Reading’s population in the 19c as the industrial revolution provided new and developing industries for the town. It is through the development of certain streets and areas within the conservation area that we

can spot these changing styles, encapsulating nearly all urban domestic building types common to Reading during the 19c within the one relatively small area.

The remarkable element of the Conservation Area is its range of residential building types as a microcosm of residential styling in Reading predominantly throughout the course of the late 18th century to the first part of the 20th century. The range within the area, displays examples of high-end housing for Reading's wealthy businessmen to houses for the common man and labourer within each of the Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian periods. For example, the Georgian period is exemplified at the high end along Castle Street and Castle Hill and on the more modest sector in the early artisan cottages along Prospect Street. The Victorian era is exemplified at the higher end by the houses along Jesse Terrace and on the more modest scales with housing along Howard Street and Belle Vue Road. The late Victorian and early Edwardian period is exemplified on the high end with the fine villas of Castle Crescent, Mansfield Road and Russell Street and for the more common labourer with the houses along Anstey Road. The Conservation Area neatly encapsulates this wide range of styles and end use developments within the relatively small space of the Conservation Area itself.

Asides from the streets exemplifying this variety of residential building style, with the inclusion of a larger section of the Oxford Road the area displays how services needed for the local residents were supplied to the area. A range of churches display the diversity of religions catered to within Reading during this time period. The range of shops along the road today are housed within buildings that have supplied the area's needs for roughly 200 years.

5.2 Building types and forms

Buildings in the area are predominantly residential particularly along the infill streets of the Conservation Area. There are a high number of terraces exemplary of Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian periods throughout the area with a limited amount of detached and semi-detached properties. The heights of the properties range from 2-3 and a half stories throughout the area and this height parameter is a very notable feature of the area. Property footprints vary largely in accordance with the social status for which the houses were originally built.

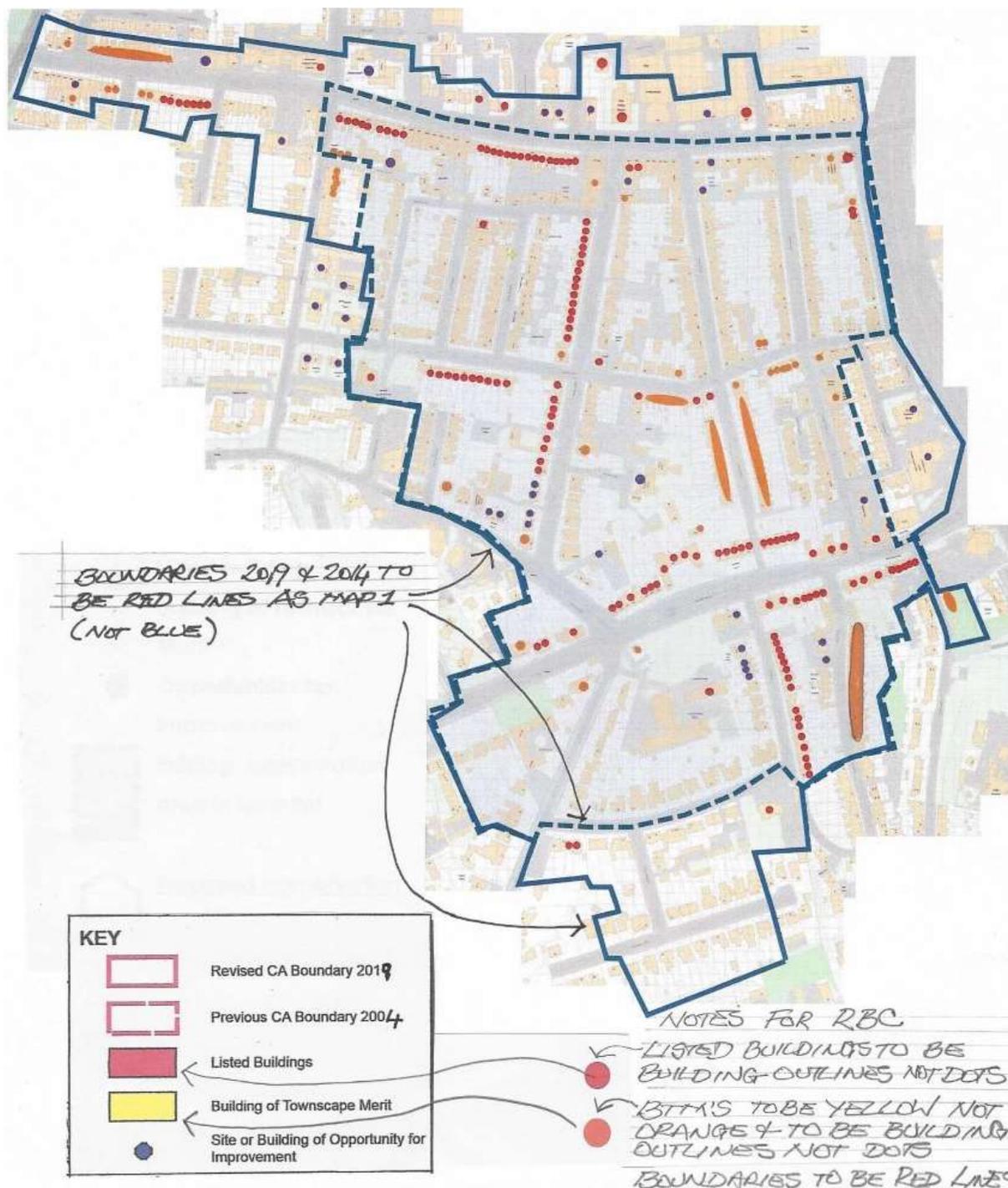
There are numerous places of worship, predominantly along the Oxford Road and in the streets north of Castle Hill. The Oxford Road additionally exhibits a large variety of retail services for the residential streets off of it in the shop frontages along its route.

5.3 Materials, styles and features

The range of materials used within the Conservation Area is a variety of local vernacular materials. However, the common thread is Reading's famous brick and tiles; predominantly in red, but displaying a full range of brick colours and finishes, as used throughout all the style periods within the area. Materials for each of the individual character areas are highlighted at the end of each character area section.

Because of the building of the infill streets gradually over the 19th century and therefore the grouping of the assorted exemplary ranges as a result, ample opportunity for understanding the evolution and responses to residential needs over the time period is easily understood.

5.4 Buildings of local historic interest and Buildings of Townscape Merit



Conservation Area Listed Buildings, Buildings of Townscape Merit and Opportunities for Enhancement Map

Within each individual character area description in section 6, listed buildings and Buildings of Townscape Merit are noted for the area. A Building of Townscape Merit is a building that does not qualify as listed building by Historic England, but the building is essential to the character and landscape of the area and defines the specialness of the area.

A Building of Townscape Merit designates a special building within a Conservation Area similar to a locally listed building that is not in a Conservation Area, as defined by Reading Borough Council's draft Local Plan to be adopted at the end of 2019.

5.5 Public realm- Floorscape, street lighting, street furniture and local detail

Street lighting

The majority of the lighting in the area is provided by slim silver modern steel columns with simple glass lanterns. Whilst they are not particularly dominant, they are likewise not in keeping with a conservation area setting and as a collection they are overall detrimental to the area. Their lights are very bright and placed at a first-floor level for many of the terraced houses, cause a harsh shine into bedrooms and primary living areas at night.

The Council has recently undergone a replacement lighting scheme to convert lights in lampposts throughout the town with halogen lighting. This has meant the loss and replacement of many of the old cast iron gas lampposts throughout the town as the costs to convert these lampposts were higher than average. Many of the cast iron lampposts were made originally in Reading's iron foundries. Sadly, the Conservation Area lost all but one on Franklin Street. There is however, early discussion with the CAAC and the Council to try to replace some of the converted ones that were lost throughout the town onto several of the streets within the Conservation Area where there is a particular need of enhanced streetscape amenity.

The main thoroughfares have the tallest and largest fixtures with shorter ones in the less busy residential streets. The lights over the IDR are very tall and they cast a very harsh unnatural shine at night that shines strongly into the Conservation Area a distance of up to 100 metres away. The worst affected streets are Howard Street, Body Road, Anstey Road, Carey Street and Zinzan Street.

The scope for improving the street lighting fixtures of the area has wide potential for improvement to the local streetscape.



Lights from the IDR ((above left) and halogen street lights glaring into terraced housing at night along Zinzan Street

Communications wires and electricity

The area relies on the supply of electricity, telephone and internet to be delivered via wires that radiate out from telegraph poles throughout the area. In streets where there are multiple households within properties the wires overhead to properties from the poles causes a substantial visual blight to the streetscape and sky views. A programme to work with suppliers of these services to reduce redundant wires would be welcome.



Overhead wires on a street with numerous HMOs.

Tarmacadam:

As noted in the 2004 appraisal, the majority of the paving in the Conservation Area is modern tarmacadam. Tarmacadam pavements are generally not in keeping within a conservation area setting and they look old and dirty very quickly.

The current patchwork appearance of much of the Oxford Road between the IDR and Prospect Street (primarily along the south side of the street) is a result of an earlier improvements scheme with concrete block paving wherein the blocks have been replaced with tarmacadam unevenly throughout the street in sections. The entire pavement of the Oxford Road is rife with multiple materials and patches that are very distracting along the road and gives it a run-down appearance. This is not unlike many of the streets within the conservation area in certain areas.

Granite kerbs and gutters:

Positively, however, many of the streets retain their 19th century granite kerbs and stone gutters, with the occasional setted crossover.

Examples as noted within the 2004 appraisal include:

- Castle Crescent: 100mm granite kerbs with 300mm stone gutters
- Coley Hill: 150mm granite kerbs with three lines of granite setts creating the gutter

- Castle Hill: 300mm wide granite kerbs and 300mm granite gutter, with three lines of granite setts on the corner junctions
- Russell Street: 100-300mm granite kerbs and setted gutters
- Jesse Terrace: short lengths of 100mm wide stone kerbs with 300mm wide stone gutters
- Zinzan Street: 100mm granite kerbs with some stone or setted gutters in front of nos. 8-10 curved kerb showing an original entrance way to the back of the properties for carriages
- Oxford Road: 300mm wide granite kerbs with modern cast iron bollards, recently repainted black.

Sections of sett stones remain in three noticeable locations:

Baker Street: an appx1.5 sq. m area of setted stones outside the basement entrance to the Oasis Community Centre.

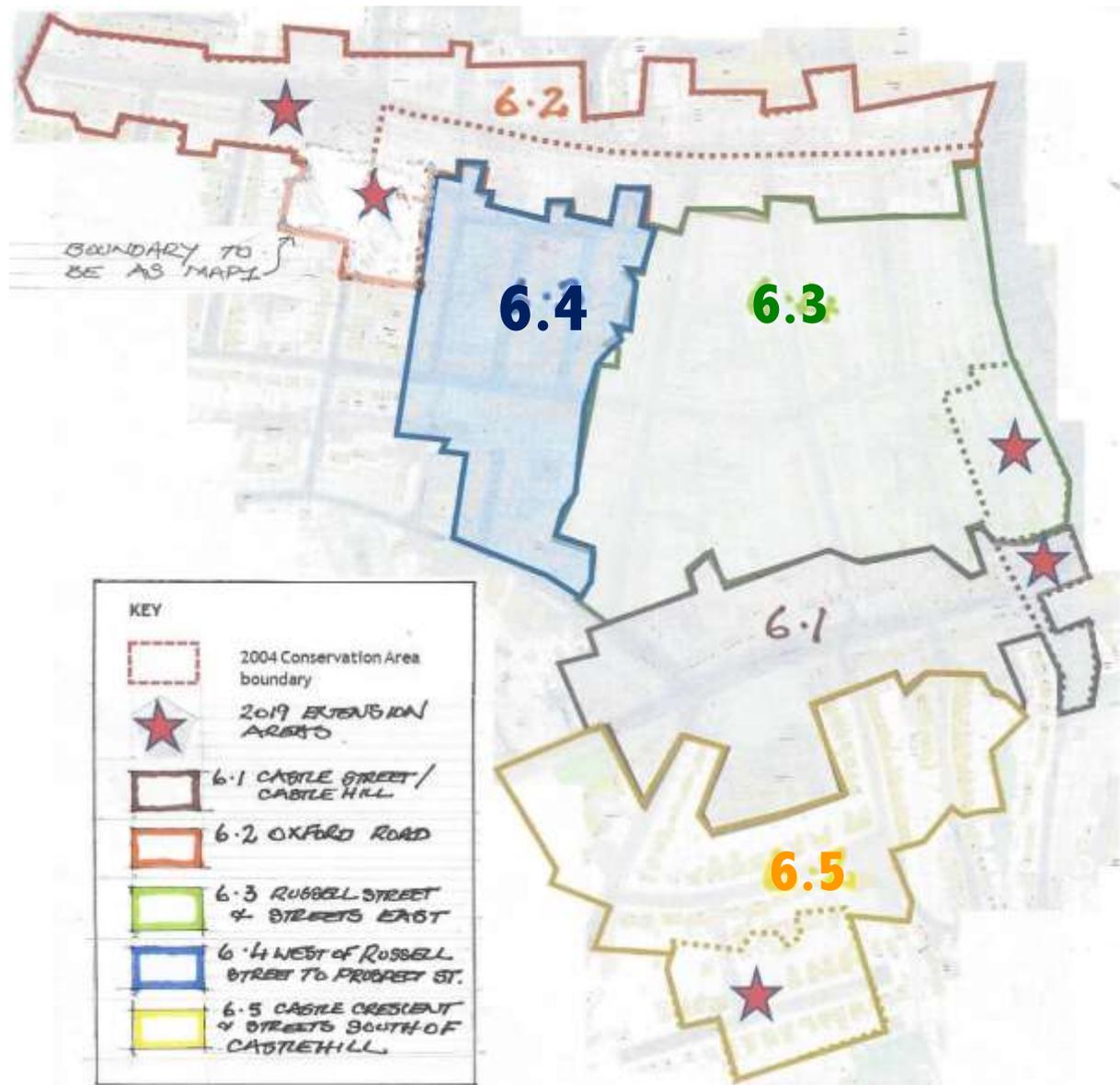
Belle Vue Road: at the end of the road near the fencing to the back of the properties, remains a large area of sett stones (appx 12 sq. m area) uncovered by tarmac. You are easily able to see the fan pattern of the sett stones that once may have covered much of the area.

Prospect Street at Prospect Mews: a large (appx 4 sq. m area) of large stone setts or cobbles at the entrance area to the Mews.

Cast Iron Bollards and benches

The Oxford Road and the east side of Howard Street have rows of fairly modern cast iron bollards that lend an attractive appearance to the area. Recently repainted they are generally a benefit to the area. Benches along the Oxford Road were recently removed in an effort to reduce ASB.

6. Character Areas



This section breaks down this large Conservation Area into geographical areas of particular and consistent character, identifying for each the factors which create that character and which demand careful consideration whenever change is contemplated.

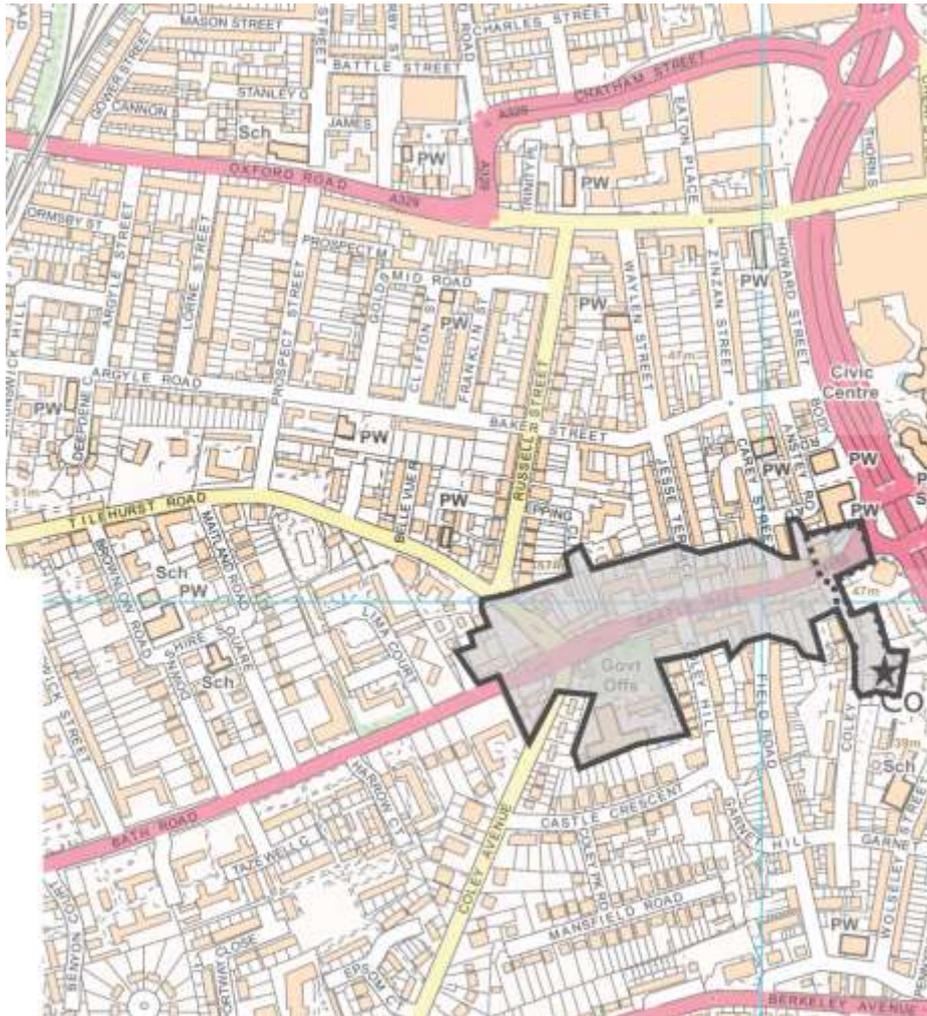
Because of the size of the conservation area, each character area is in many ways a micro-conservation area of its own. These 5 sections are designed to provide quick access for planners and developers to home in directly on what is important within the immediate surrounds of a site.

Within each character area appraisal a breakdown of its attributes exist as follows:

- An overview of *significance* of the character that defines the area;
- typical *materials* found within the area;
- critical and important views within the area are highlighted;
- an *area analysis* gives a high-level overview to critical elements of the area;
- the area's *key positive characteristics* and features;
- the area's *negative features* are defined;

- a listing of specific *Opportunities for Enhancement* highlights buildings that provide opportunities to redevelop more in keeping with the area's special character; (see map below)
- a listing of *Buildings of Townscape Merit* highlights those buildings that contribute significantly to the character of the area and are important to retain and enhance; (see map below)
- the *Listed Buildings* within the area are pointed out. (see map below)

6.1 Castle Street / Castle Hill



Significance

Castle Hill and Castle Street comprise one of the finest, most attractive and oldest streets within the Conservation Area. It is a wide, curving, open street that winds uphill from the town centre to the chalk and clay escarpment at the junction of Castle Hill with Russell Street and Coley Avenue. This leafy street is part of the original section of the London to Bath Road and is notable for its large trees and imposing Georgian houses which afford some fine views within, into and out of the Conservation Area. The residences are some of the Conservation Area's oldest buildings, mostly two and a half to three storeys tall. Largely of Georgian period construction, there are several later additions along the road, but they do not detract significantly from the grandeur of the street. The Georgian properties have large gardens set back from the pavement and leafy vistas, high quality detailing and original features (or like-for-like

replacement features). They contribute high value to the Conservation Area and provide a unifying influence. These principal characteristics contribute to its significance and justification as a separate and unique character area.

Regrettably, the building of the IDR in 1969 divided Castle Street from the town centre and thus split the original London-Bath route in two, through the insertion of the large roundabout, losing much of the significance of that route within the town. Reconnecting this route from the heart of the town centre would be beneficial to understanding the historic course of this road and its significant role in influencing the development of the remainder of the Conservation Area.

Materials

Stucco rendering dominates many of the Georgian façades, frequently with rusticated ground floor frontages. painted in neutral shades of white and off- white, though the yellow façade and dark green doors of 107 are probably the original colours of the house. Roofs are largely of Welsh slate with small amounts of red tile, the most notable example being the street- facing mansard roof of 160 Castle Hill.

Only a few buildings expose the underlying red brick, contrasting with developments dominated by exposed brick after the 1830s-1840s. Discreet areas of brick are largely on upper floors and to the sides and rear. The unusual and striking coloured stuccoed façades of 134-144 was designed to imitate the colour of fashionable Bath stone.

Views: (see Map in 4.2)

The most important views, both within the area and into and out of it are in each direction along the Castle St/Castle Hill axis, and south-westwards along Coley Avenue. These are shown as views 4, 5a and b and 6 a and b on the views map . They unfold as the viewer travels along the escarpment ridge and follow the curve of the historic route to and from Reading, revealing the area's relationship with the town centre. View 6b (below) progressively reveals the large historic town houses along this route, which are the focal point of the Character Area.



View 6b: The view up Castle Street to Castle Hill (Courtesy of Joe Doak)

Views off this main axis are also important. View 17 (below), looking southeast up the slight incline of Coley Place, reveals the tall row of terraced houses at 3-7 Coley Place, set against the trees to the rear and contrasting with the grand Georgian houses on Castle Hill. It is a reminder of the larger terrace which once stood off Castle Street on the rise of the land above the Holy Brook.



View 17 Mansard roof terrace along the escarpment. 3 of the original 10 remaining

View 13 (below) looks south towards the back of 2 Bath Road, is an attractive view of the impressive tall chimney stacks of 2 and 4 Bath Road. View 14, looking southeast from Coley Avenue into the grounds of Yeomanry House, is of the original house and the modern Berkshire Records Office behind with the property's original gatehouse to the left.



View 13 attractive chimneyscape at the back of 2 and 4 Bath Road

Area analysis:

The Grade II listed Yeomanry House (131 and 133 Castle Hill) is the last remaining example of the style of grand houses originally built for the wealthy and prominent businessmen of Reading. It exemplifies the layout of grand houses, with its c.1840 gate house and large front garden facing out onto Castle Hill and its original drive footprint still in situ. The unusual salmon coloured brick of the original part of the gate house is notable for the extent to which this colour brick was used at that time.

The modern, purpose-built Berkshire Record Office was built on the site of the former riding arena and stables. The attractive design of its façade, massing and footprint sets it back from the historic house and its front gardens.



**Yeomanry House- house, front drive and garden,
131 Castle Hill**



**Former c.1840s gate house for Yeomanry House,
133 Castle Hill**



Berkshire Record Office, on the Yeomanry House site

2 Bath Road has a fine Georgian frontage and an attractive chimneyscape, notable at the rear of the site, as seen from the top of Russell Street. Further early 19th century construction near this junction includes Bath Place at 1 Bath Road, which is largely hidden behind a high brick wall. The grand trees (many safeguarded by TPOs) along the Bath Road heading west near the entrances to Janson Court and Lima Court are the only visible reminders of prior demolished mansions. These trees once provided the screening at the back of their large front gardens.



William Pratt Swallow's house, 2 Bath Road

chimneys and brick garden walls (Google Maps)

The large house at no. 107 still retains its original stables and the footprint of its large, original back garden. The houses on the east end of Castle Street, 107-111 and 122- 132, define this early expansion, expressed in the large, rusticated and stuccoed houses, with original arched windows and fanlights. These historic features are still intact today.

The early 19th century Bath stone Blenheim Terrace, at 97-105 Castle Street, is impressive and attractive. The houses at 97-103 are generally well-maintained but 105 is in multiple occupancy and is in a poor state of repair. The terrace represents one of only two major uses of Bath stone within the conservation area.

The fine group of houses from 113-121 are substantial Georgian homes, each contributing to the architectural variety within the terrace. The terrace is attractive because of this variety, despite the negative dropped kerbs to most of the fronts. 113 forms a particularly striking end of terrace property, with rusticated paired and channelled pilaster strips, topped with wreaths.



**Blenheim Terrace, Bath stone terrace, Attractive diverse terrace of Georgian
97-105 Castle Street properties, 113-121 Castle Street**



Bath stone coloured stuccoed Regency style terrace, 134- 144 Castle Hill

The Jesse family were local developers and had great interest in the surrounding area. The family resided at the former King's Arms Inn at 154-160 Castle Hill, associated with late 17th century beginnings from circa 1800 to circa 1900. Their hand in housing development developed a particular style, displayed in a number of the properties along the route, notably at Heritage Court (144A – 152) and at 162A- 166. The attractive verandas with concave metal roofs and Regency style metal work distinguish their developments in the area.



154- 160 Castle Hill, the former King's Arms Inn, and Jesse family home



South west end of Castle Hill, with famous TPO Cedar of Lebanon tree



Jesse family developed Heritage Court, 144A- 152 Castle Hill



Jesse family developed terrace with Regency iron detailing, , 162-168 Castle Hill

The later rusticated stucco and red brick terrace at 168-174 Castle Hill c. early 1840s, is impressive in scale and displays the waning influence of late Georgian styling in the area. Wooden sash windows remain on the façades and the surviving fanlights have an unusual styling, with a linked elongated oval pattern with a centre area for a lamp within the fanlight. One of these has been retained at 168. However, the terrace is in multiple occupancy; the western end of the terrace is poorly maintained and has seen the erosion and loss of original features as a result. Constant estate agent signage and poor maintenance of the frontages and façades of the properties contribute negatively to the appearance of this corner.



The former Horse and Jockey (The Castle Tap) rebuilt early 19th century, 120 Castle Street

The most substantial detracting building on the street is the late 20th century residential building at 129 Castle Hill. The flats of Castlegate at 114 Castle Street, although recent, drew upon cues from Georgian features and as a result, do not detract from the street's overall character.

Key positive characteristics:

- the former King's Arms Inn at 154-160 Castle Hill, associated with late 17th century beginnings

- wide open space, associated with views of the sky and long views within, into and out of the Conservation Area
- notable views of houses and trees along the street towards Reading's town centre
- the grand Cedar of Lebanon tree at 154- 160 Castle Hill and other trees along the route (Yeomanry House garden and others) contribute considerable green value to the area
- attractive listed Georgian terraces (for example, the Bath stone terrace at 97-105, the Regency styled terrace at 134-144 Heritage Court, the red brick and stucco at 168-174 Castle Hill, and the varied terrace at 113-121)
- Yeomanry House, with its retained front garden, footprint of the original drive, and former gatehouse
- 107 Castle Hill with its original features, stables and back garden
- The former Horse and Jockey (now the Castle Tap) rebuilt early 19th century, 120 Castle Street

Negative features:

- busy and heavy traffic, especially during rush hours
- poor quality, tarmac surfaces
- clutter of excessive modern street furniture and poor pedestrian links at mid points along the road
- some poorly maintained front boundaries and dropped kerb parking at 107-109 and at 115-121 Castle Hill
- modern building at 129 Castle Hill
- the poor condition of some properties, notably at 105 Castle Street, 125-127 Castle Hill, 172-174 Castle Hill (terrace), 2 Bath Road and 1 Bath Road

Buildings presenting Opportunities for Enhancement

- Ridgeborough Court, 129 Castle Hill, Circa 1970-1990

Buildings of Townscape Merit

- Gatehouse, 133 Castle Hill. Circa 1840.
- 8 Bath Road. Circa 1880-1890.
- 1 Bath Road. Circa 1830 -original building.
- 3-7 Coley Place. Circa 1850-1870.
- The stables at 152 Castle Hill. Circa 1840-1850s.

Listed Buildings

- 97 to 105 Castle Street (S. side). Early 19C Terrace of five houses, 3 storeys and basement. Bath stone, arched openings to ground floor, string courses and parapet. Steps to principal storey. Original cast iron railings to areas. Houses to end of terrace set slightly forward.
- 107 Castle Street (S. side). Circa 1800 Georgian stucco house, 3 storeys and semi basement, steps to entrance. Principal floor, arched windows and rusticated stucco, four Ionic pilasters and moulded entablature to upper floors, slate roof. Poor forecourt as parking.
- 109 Castle Street (S. side). Circa 1800 Georgian stucco house, 2 storeys plus semi basement and attic. Steps to entrance. Rusticated stucco to basement and entrance storey. Tripartite windows. Bracketed eaves and slate roof. Poor forecourt as parking.

- 111 Castle Street (S. side). Late 18C-early 19C house, altered, 3 storeys and semi basement. Stucco, rusticated to ground floor and basement, cornice and parapet. Steps to entrance. Porch with slender fluted Doric columns.
- 120 Castle Street. Public house, The Castle Tap. Mid 19C, 2 storeys, red brick, modelled to first floor. Stone or stucco cornice and string course, slate roof. Two tall half glazed doorways.
- 122 Castle Street. Circa 1840, 3 storey stucco house, rusticated ground floor and corner pilasters, raised surrounds to upper windows, cornice, parapet and slate roof. Central entrance door and fanlight, panelled pilasters. 2 storey extension to west.
- 124 Castle Street. Early 19C, 3 storeys. Symmetrical façade with central door and fanlight, five bays wide. Stucco with, string course cornice and parapet, slate roof.
- 126 Castle Street. Early 19C, 3 tall storeys and basement, set back, stucco, channelled ground floor with arches, mouldings to first floor windows, cornice and parapet. Railings.
- 128 to 132 Castle Street. Terrace of 3 houses, early 19C, 3 storeys, stucco. Central part projecting and pedimented with delicate wrought iron balconies to first floor. Hipped slate roofs. 132 has entrance on return western elevation with 2 storey bay.
- 134 to 144 Castle Street. Symmetrical terrace of six houses. Early 19C, 3 storeys and basement. 2 projecting gabled bays. Arched openings to ground floor. Second floor bullseye windows to four houses. Rendered Bath stone front, hipped slate roofs. A good design.
- 113 Castle Street (S. side). 1850s on older site. 3 storeys plus basement. Rendered with heavy moulded parapet, string course, channelled pilasters, bracketed hood to door.
- 115 Castle Street (S. side). After 1823. 3 storeys and basement. Rendered, 2 string courses, steps to entrance, radiating fanlight, slate roof.
- 117 and 119 Castle Street (S. side). After 1823. 3 storeys and basement. Rendered, similar to 115. Wrought iron railings of the period to first floor on later support. Slate roof.
- 121 Castle Street (S. side). After 1823. 3 storeys and basement. Rendered, cornice and parapet, arched openings to ground floor. Right hand set back. Fanlight and pilastered doorcase.
- 123 Castle Street, (S. side). Mid 19C. 3 storeys and semi basement, red brick, rendered and channelled lower floors and window surrounds. Steps to entrance. Slate roof. Chimneys.
- 125 and 127 Castle Street (S. side). Mid 19C. 4 storeys and basement, red brick with contrasting dressings, paired windows rendered surrounds. Steps to columned twin porch. Slate roof.
- 144A to 152 Castle Street. Early 19C. Symmetrical terrace of six houses now flats. Early 19C, 4 storeys and basement. End houses set forward. Rendered Bath stone, cornice and parapet, mouldings to windows, arched first floor. Ground floor verandah with railings. Slate roof.
- 154 to 160 Castle Street. Former Kings Arms Inn. Grade II*. A U-shaped group of buildings, now four houses with 18C fronts but older origins. 2 storey centre block, end blocks taller with 2 storey circular bays. Painted stucco with cornice and parapets. Mansard roofs. Two with porches. One of the finest building groups in the Conservation Area.

- 162, 162A, to 166 Castle Street. Early-mid 19C. Symmetrical terrace of four houses, end houses gabled and set forward. 3 storeys and basement. Rendered Bath stone, channelled ground floor, verandah and railings to centre houses. Slate roof.
- 168 to 174 Castle Street. Early-mid 19C. Terrace of originally four houses, 4 storeys and basement. Red brick. Stucco ground floor, 2 storey end bays, cornice and parapet. Slate roof. One fanlight, at 168, retains lantern.
- 2 Bath Road, Swallow House. Circa 1780. 2 storey and basement. Red brick, delicate wooden cornice, slate roof with end chimneys. Wings to either side of centre block. Central door surround with open pediment and Doric pillars. A fine Georgian house in some disrepair.
- 4 and 6 Bath Road. Early 19C. Symmetrical pair, 3 storeys and basement. Red brick now painted. Stucco ground floor, window surrounds and parapet. Slate roof. Railings.
- Yeomanry House, Castle Hill. Early 19C. Original building 2 storeys, stucco with moulded cornice and stone balustrade. 2 storey circular bay windows. Central recessed entry with wide fanlight. Slate roof. Unfortunate later 19C extension wing to right.

6.2 Oxford Road



Significance

The Oxford Road was one of the earliest roads out of Reading, a primary route to Pangbourne and Oxford south of the River Thames. Today, it is an active pedestrian and vehicular traffic route, well known for its vibrant and diverse array of independent shops, reflecting the area's proud, mixed immigrant communities. The 2- and 3-storey streetscape is a mix of impressive Georgian terraces interspersed with Victorian shops and houses.

Amongst the half-mile route of 19c heritage buildings, forty of them are listed. Regrettably, however, the road has a negative and self-defeating reputation associated with the poverty, substance misuse and low-level crime and anti-social behaviour found within the area. The "broken window theory" in townscapes has proven true along the road in many sections.

A general neglect of retail frontages and poorly-maintained, terraced houses is all too common along the road. Nevertheless, the area's early history is still strongly evident in its many Georgian houses and terraces. Later Arts and Crafts, Edwardian and Victorian influences are apparent in the school and attractive polychrome brick and terracotta façades; the first-floor levels above the shops in the terrace east of Gower Street are fine examples.

The Oxford Road and its surrounding residential streets have for decades hosted immigrants from near and far, many having later permanently settled within the area. Today's shopfronts express this long-standing pattern of population development and growth.

As suggested by early maps, shops have long been a feature of the road, radiating out from the town centre in shops with residential above, between Alfred Street and Eaton Place and between Russell Street and Waylen Street, prior to 1833. Whilst the nature of the shops and services has altered, the current hair salons, estate agents, key shops, pharmacies, dentists, and grocers serve the particular needs and niche markets of today's diverse population. The shops act as a community focus and help share varied cultures with others. The historic parish church, together with the three non-conformist churches along the road, also address the local population's distinct groups.

Regrettably, a combination of modern ad-hoc alterations with the poorly maintained public realm along the road strikes a distracting discordance. Many modern alterations are out of keeping with the historic environment. Some modern builds have failed to respect the Conservation Area's character. Much of the residential accommodation, including above the shops, tends to be poorly maintained. Along with the exciting and vibrant nature of the Oxford Road, the clash of modern and historic materials and poor maintenance makes it difficult to fully appreciate the street's historic character.

The public realm areas is poor in many sections. Traffic management signs should be rationalised. Trees have been planted along the route to improve the public realm and this should be expanded.

Materials

Reading's most dominant building material, red brick, is seen frequently especially along the Georgian terraced façades. Polychrome brick and terracotta embellishment is notable along the route nearer to the railway bridge. Stucco is also common and notable at 197-203 Sidney Terrace and on many of the retail/residential buildings. Roofs are almost entirely slate with the notable exception of the red tiled roof of the Oxford Road Community School.

Views: (see Map in 4.2)

In view 7, looking west along Oxford Road towards the railway bridge from the eastern end, the parade of polychrome brick residential and retail buildings display their colours well, with the with the bustle of Oxford Road's pedestrians and vehicles in front. The bridge, with its faded mural of doves, designed by schoolchildren, has been landmark for over 170 years.

View 8, looking northwest, shows the striking Oxford Road Community School, which, like the retail terrace in view 7, is brilliant in the late afternoon sun.



**Parade of multi-cultural grocers and shops,
Oxford Road between Russell Street and Waylen Street**

**Georgian housing, modern successful pastiche and
unlisted shop front buildings mix along the streetscape
between Russell Street and Prospect Street**

Area Analysis:

The oldest buildings date to the early 19th century, in several long, listed terraces notably at: 149-177 Oxford Road; 187-193, 195-197 and 197-203 Oxford Road and Prospect Terrace; 237-247 Oxford Road and 2 Lorne Street. Prospect Terrace is a fine, listed Georgian terrace in mixed condition, impacted by the petrol station opposite and the busy road.

Maps show that these terraces and the shops, with residential over, at the corner of Alfred Street towards Eaton Place along the north side, and shops on the south side east of Russell Street, existed prior to 1833.

Most of the early residential terraces are in moderate to poor condition, with several converted to shops at ground floor level. The Georgian terraces are largely of red brick, except for the impressive stuccoed villas at nos. 197-203. Fortunately, a majority of the listed terraces still retain original windows, doors and detailing. Some of the original brick walls in front of these properties, notably at nos. 149-153, need repair and re-pointing.

Additionally, two detached Georgian houses at 101 and 104 Oxford Road remain from the earlier villas that dotted the route. They are in moderate condition and house businesses.



**101 Oxford Road-a detached Georgian family home
with original high back garden walls**



**National Meteorological Society at 104 Oxford Road, a
detached Georgian house with porticoed front porch**



Run-down Georgian terrace at 149-177 Oxford Road



Grand stuccoed Georgian Sidney Terrace at 197-203 Oxford Road

The shop frontages along the north and south side of Oxford Road, between Howard Street and Russell Street, are the worst affected by ad-hoc, ill-advised renovations and neglect of their façades. Irregular frontages and shops spilling wares and storage out onto the pavement create a disjointed appearance along the roadway. A more uniform appearance could re-establish the positive character of the street and help raise the area's poor reputation. Positive regeneration is needed, along with reducing the crime and ASB in the area. In similar cases elsewhere, regeneration measures have helped the viability and robustness of local shops by enhancing the unique selling point of such areas.

Renovation of the Holy Trinity Parish church, built c.1826, could not fund reinstatement of its centre spire, which would have been ideal given the new block of flats shortly to be built directly to its east.

The rise and on-going strength of Nonconformist Churches in the area from the mid 19th century is evidenced by the Providence Chapel, dating from c.1859, which has a poor modern tarmac frontage. Bridge Hall, dating from c. 1899, was built for Reading's Open Brethren group and need external improvements. The Pavilion, once a well-attended cinema, which opened in 1929, is now home to the non-conformist Lifespring Church. Much of the original cinema's interior detailing has been carefully restored. In recognition, each of these buildings is listed as Buildings of Townscape Merit.



The listed Holy Trinity Parish Church, at the intersection of Russell Street



Providence Chapel c 1859, 103 Oxford Road (Google Maps)

Building of Townscape Merit



The Pavilion, former cinema, corner of Russell Street, now well restored and home to the Lifespring Church

Building of Townscape Merit



Bridge Hall, originally built for the Reading Open Brethren Group (Google Maps) Building of Townscape Merit

The connector road of Prospect Street laid in early in the 19c by William Pratt Swallow is a natural extension to the Oxford Road in defining how residential streets came to be structured off of that road. IT is important to be understood in that context with its houses contrasting to the grand Sidney Terrace to its north along Oxford Road. Sadly today, the crime and ASB along Oxford Road radiates into this street the Mews behind Sidney Terrace.

The development along the east side of Prospect Street from the Oxford Road up to Baker Street, consists of small late Georgian artisan terrace, nos. 1-9, built prior to 1833. The terrace collectively is in poor to fair condition. Along with Prospect Mews, to the north, built prior to 1853, which is in fair condition, these properties exemplify the homes of a many of Reading's residents during the early part of the 19th century. Two of the houses, 5 and 9 Prospect Street, are stuccoed like Prospect Mews. The house at 9 Prospect Street, has the original fanlight and windows, along with many original interior features and is still in use as a family residence. A representative expanse of stone paving has been retained at the entrance into Prospect Mews.

The much larger houses at 11-23 Prospect Street **were all built prior to 1853**. 23 Prospect Street has attractive later polychrome detailed modifications which were noted positively during the initial consultation in 2016 and shows the desire of residents later in the century to enhance their properties to keep pace with changing styles especially coming into fashion with the later infill along Oxford Road.

The houses opposite at nos. 4-26 on the west side of the street, are Edwardian additions notable for their polychrome brick and attractive terracotta embellishments. The modern infill at nos. 8-16 replaces an historical stonemason's yard and was built sympathetically, noting the area's materials, massing and footprint so not to contrast unduly with adjoining properties.



1-9 Prospect Street, modest Georgian artisan terrace in poor condition



Prospect Mews, mews houses with an expanse of stone pavement at the entrance to the alleyway

Further along the Oxford Road, at the western end, the long terrace of c.1890 shops with residences above at nos. 152 to 180, have vibrant, polychrome façades which retain their integrity and are unpainted. This terrace is largely unspoiled, exhibiting a high level of detail and better condition than other retail terraces to the west. Original bargeboards above centre dormers and polychromed chimneys are largely intact. Although many of the windows above have been converted to uPVC and the exuberant retail signs are a moderate detraction, the terrace is materially fine and is further enhanced by the coordinating residential terraces opposite it at nos. 249-261.

Two polychromed residential terraces at nos. 249-253 and nos. 255-261, c.1890, sit opposite each other on either side of the entrance to Argyle Street. Their rare mirror form is worthy of protection. They are in reasonable condition, although the eastern one has lost chimneys.

The terrace at nos. 225-235 is a simple two-and half storey red brick terrace with deep-set gardens. They are in fairly good condition with front boundaries largely intact. The two more exuberant poly-chrome terraced houses at the eastern end at 221-223 have front gardens converted to hard standing and a loss of a red brick front wall that detracts from the rest of the terrace.

Modern infill development, from the latter half of the 20th century, blights the historic streetscape, most intensely on the north side of the street. Several modern buildings damage Oxford Road's historic character, notably at: Eaton Court at 104-112; the vacant lot at 114; the Oddfellow's Hall at 118 and Richer Sounds at 118A. Reduced or gravelled parking areas with landscaped borders could better screen these sites from the road.

The BP petrol station at no. 150 and Tesco Express at nos. 211-221 disrupt the historic built line of the road and detract from the settings of the surrounding listed buildings and Conservation Area. Their adverse impact includes their materials, massing and set-back footprints, tarmac parking spaces and their out-of-keeping modern design. They collectively provide opportunities for enhancement such as improved entrances and green landscaping.

Other properties that offer opportunities for enhancement include Allison Court, no. 193, which provides pleasant green space and trees. Its new fencing makes a clearer boundary line along the road.

The MTC Motorcycles dealership at nos. 267-271 conceals an historic villa, Oxford Lodge, though its the roof can be seen from Gower Street opposite. The shop's façade, scale, appearance and set back is discordant with the remainder of the area.

The railway bridge is a prominent reminder of Reading's progress and industry in the mid 19th century. The Reading West Railway station is being modernised, which could substantially improve the area and the appearance of the bridge if it were either repainted or re-built to reflect its original brickwork and architectural quality.



Reading West railway bridge, Oxford Road

Key Positive Characteristics

- The Georgian terraces of 149-177, 187-193, 195-197, 197-203 and Prospect Terrace at 2 Lorne Street and 237-247 Oxford Road, though many of these properties are in poor condition.
- Oxford Road Community School, which is well-maintained
- Holy Trinity Church and its sealed catacombs
- Bridge Hall, which is currently housing a church
- Providence Chapel with a polychrome brick façade
- The Pavilion, a well-restored former cinema, now home to the Lifespring Church
- The impressive Gothic Revival villa at 118 set back from the road.
- The early Georgian family residences at 101 and 104
- Cast iron bollards and new tree plantings along the route
- The unpainted polychrome terrace of shops at 152 to 180, east of Gower Street
- The twinned polychrome terraces at 249-253 and 255-261 either side of Argyle Street opposite the shops

Negative Features

- Modern glass shop fronts
- Metal roller security doors
- Garish, illuminated and irregularly sized retail signage
- The poor state of repair of many of the properties along the road including redundant wires, satellite dishes and uPVC windows
- Excessive and erratic public realm street signage
- Poor pavement repairs with tarmac among stone slabs
- Poorly managed commercial and residential waste

- Poorly kept front retail spaces extending to the pavements detracting from the traditional street line
- The poor condition of the railway bridge over the Oxford Road

Buildings presenting Opportunities for Enhancement

- BP Service Station, 150 Oxford Road. Circa 2010s.
- Tesco Express, 211- 212 Oxford Road. Circa 2010s.
- Allison Court, 193 Oxford Road. Circa 1960s.
- The Royal PH, 2 Bedford Road (at the corner of Oxford Road). Circa 1930s.
- Richer Sounds, 118A Oxford Road. Circa 1970s
- The Odd Fellows Hall, 118 Oxford Road. Circa 1970s
- Eaton Court, 104-112 Oxford Road. Circa 1970- 1980s
- Building of flats, 123 Oxford Road. Circa 1980-1990s
- Garages, end of Prospect Mews, Circa ??
- MTC Motorcycle Dealership, 261-271 Oxford Road, Circa ??.

Buildings of Townscape Merit:

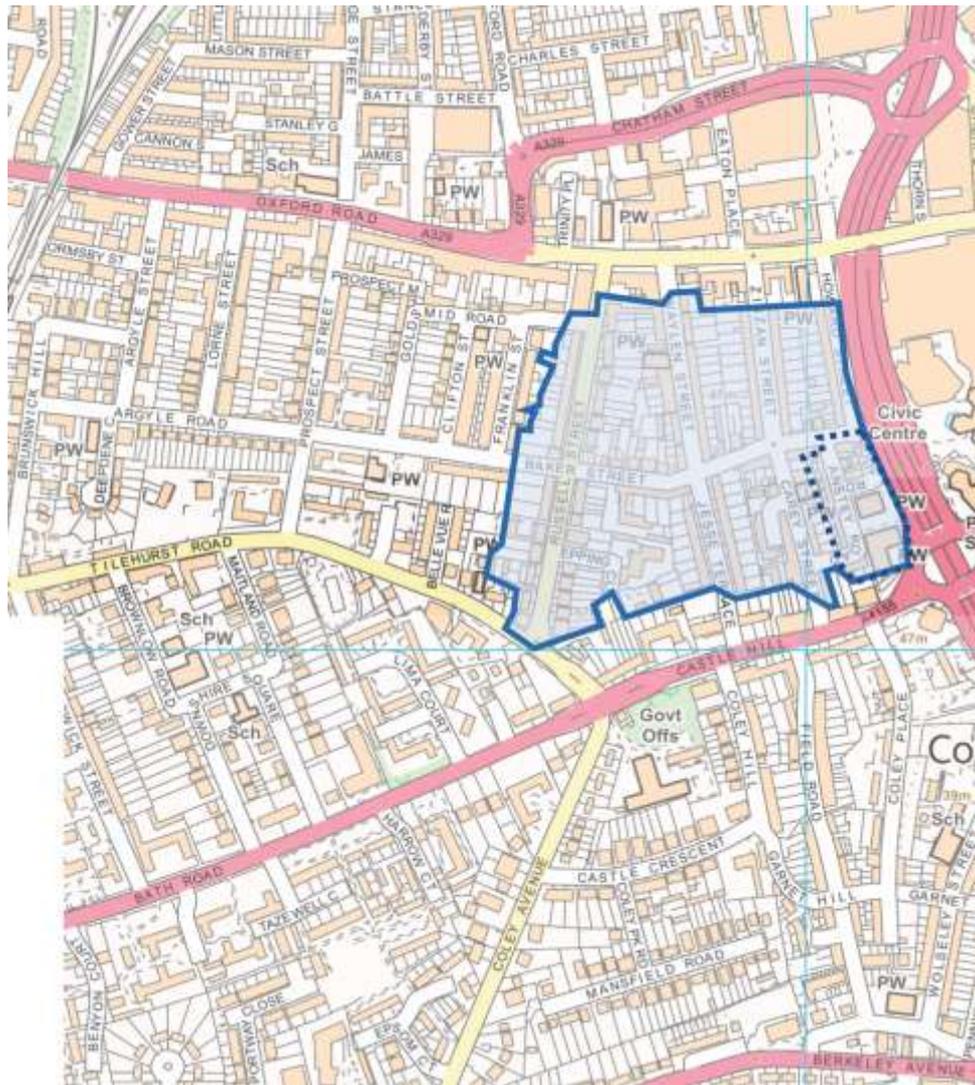
- Bridge Hall, 184 Oxford Road, 1899.
- Retail terrace, 152-180 Oxford Road. Circa 1880-1890s.
- Mirror image terraces, 249-253 and 255-261 Oxford Road, circa 1880-1890s.
- Prospect Mews, Prospect Mews. Circa 1830-1850.
- Lifespring Church, The Pavillion, 143-145 Oxford Road. Circa 1926.

Listed Buildings:

- 101 Oxford Road. 2 storey plus basement detached Georgian, early 19C. Red brick, stone dressings, central doorway, timber cornice and slate roof. Original garden walls. Forms a good group with adjoining Chapel and 105 Oxford Road.
- 104 Oxford Road (N. side), Royal Meteorological Society. Early 19C, 2 storey Georgian detached. Red brick, central stone/stucco Doric portico and cornice, slate roof.
- 139 and 141 Oxford Road. 3 storeys, mid 19C, painted brick. Windows replaced with uPVC, original arched doorway and fanlight to left, recorded in listing notes, lost since 2004 Appraisal. Red brick extension to side on Russell Street with poor window/wall ratio. Included as extreme example of the deterioration of listed buildings in this part of the Conservation Area.
- Holy Trinity Church (N. side). 1826 and 1845, stone gabled facade with lancet windows and octagonal bell turret. Interior has reclaimed chancel screen by Pugin.
- 118 Oxford Road (N. side). Circa 1845, set back, gabled 3 storey ashlar stone villa relates to Holy Trinity Church, chimneys, 2 storey bays, slate roof.

- 149 to 161 Oxford Road. Terrace of seven houses, 2 storeys plus semi basement, early-mid 19C. Red brick, stucco cornice, slate roofs, steps to principal storey, two as shops.
- 163 and 165 Oxford Road. Pair of houses, early-mid 19C, 3 storeys plus semi basement, with flanking 2 storey set back entrance bays, steps to principal storey, red brick, hipped slate roofs. On axis with Bedford Road. Inappropriate advertising fascia as with others in road.
- 167 and 169 Oxford Road. Terrace of two houses continues in the style of 149-161 Oxford Road, early-mid 19C red brick, stucco cornice, slate roofs, tall chimneys. One basement now a shop.
- 171 to 177 Oxford Road. Terrace of 4 houses, 3 storeys plus semi basement, early 19C, steps to principal storey, red brick, slate roofs, ridge chimneys, original railings to two.
- 120 and 122 Oxford Road (N. side). Pair of houses, 2 storeys plus semi basement, circa 1830–40, plain red brick with central pediment, arched windows to central bays, hipped slate roof.
- 124 Oxford Road (N. side). Circa 1850 detached, rendered, 2.5 storeys, tripartite windows.
- 187 to 193 Oxford Road. Terrace of four houses, 3 storeys plus semi basement, early-mid 19C, steps to principal storey, red brick, stone string course, hipped slate roof, ridge chimneys.
- 195 and 197 Oxford Road. Pair of houses, 3 storey plus semi basement, early 19C Georgian red brick, slate roof. Elegant door cases and Greek fret lintels. No loss of windows at 195.
- 199 to 203 Oxford Road. Terrace of three houses, early- mid 19C, 3 storeys plus semi basement. Rendered with parapet, mouldings to windows, steps to principal storey.
- Oxford Road Primary School. 1880-83 and 1894. A complete and homogenous group of buildings, 1.5 to 3 storeys plus tower, set behind wall and railings of the period. Red brick, moulded decorative drip moulds and string courses, part tile hung. Steeply pitched tiled roofs with decorative ridge tiles.
- 237 to 247 Oxford Road, Prospect Terrace, and includes 2 Lorne Street which is the end of the terrace. Terrace of seven houses, early-mid 19C, 3 storeys plus semi basement, red brick, hipped slate roofs. Most retain elegant arched doorcases and Greek fret lintels.

6.3 Russell Street and streets east



Significance

Russell Street, and the collection of streets to the east towards the IDR, demonstrate the wide range of Reading's Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian residential architecture, mixing modest and grand properties. A primary focus for housing during Reading's prosperous growth in the 19th century, houses range from Georgian 4-storey terraces and semi-detached houses for the affluent to long terraces of 2- to 3-storey Victorian townhouses, large Edwardian villas and more modest Edwardian terraces. Varying levels of original detailing remain throughout the area.

However, many houses are in poor repair and collectively create a sense of neglect, despite small well-maintained areas. The larger houses lend themselves to multiple-occupancy, a significant contributor to the loss of building integrity over recent decades.

The architectural planform remains as does the integrity of many buildings, and the expanse and grandeur of Russell Street and the uniform character of Jesse Terrace are among the Conservation Area's finest streetscapes. As a microcosm of Reading's 19th century housing styles, including some high-quality listed houses, these intensely developed and fine-grained streets form a unified residential neighbourhood of special character and significance.

Materials

Red brick is common in the Georgian and early Victorian houses, though sadly over-painting is all too common. Red brick boundary walls are important, and pleasant variety is introduced by polychrome colours in red, tan and grey amongst some of the late-Victorian/Edwardian houses. Stucco is evident from the Georgian era and Welsh slate roofing prevails. In some sections, cast iron railings and details remain retaining a gracious touch once along the streets.

Multi-pane single glazed windows are exceedingly being lost to uPVC windows and original simple multi-panelled doors have been lost to uPVC doors that have had an overall degrading effect.

Views: (see Map in 4.2)

Views 9,11 and 12 are located within this character area and illustrate the variety of architectural forms found within the area.

View 9, looking north towards Oxford Road from down Russell Street illustrates the prime and fortuitous positioning of the Holy Trinity parish church at the bottom of the slope. It takes in, the juxtaposition of the Georgian terraces to the west and the large late Victorian villas to the east and give a sense of how the neighbourhood developed. This view was first photographed by Fox Talbot c.1845.

View 11, looking east along Baker Street, illustrates the bend in the road that has been characteristic of this view since the development of Baker Street east of Russell Street. The view takes in the long imposing three storey Georgian stuccoed terrace on the south side of the street (c.1830s). The former studio of Henry Fox Talbot is at No. 55 in this terrace at the west end. The cottage-like detached two storey house at No. 14 Baker Street and the two imposing, listed semidetached houses at Nos. 33- 39 form an attractive viewpoint. Number 1 Jesse Terrace and its high brick wall beyond begin to unfold as the viewer winds round the bend.

The variety of houses in View 11 contrasts with the neat symmetry of matching terraced houses along Jesse Terrace, as seen in View 12. The cast iron verandas and large front gardens add interest to View 12, looking south towards Castle Hill.

Area Analysis

The original properties on the western side of Howard Street have been retained; the houses along the eastern half were demolished for the creation of the IDR in the 1960s. 4-4A Howard Street is a listed Georgian semi-detached pair of houses; the original stuccoed rustication on the ground floor of 4A has been retained. 2 Howard Street dates from c.1850-70s, and is an attractive and well-kept, family home of substantial size with a well-tended front garden. There are a number of original front garden cast iron railings at 16-22 and two original curved stucco dividing walls at 4 and 22 (see fig XX). The rendered façade at 8 and the irregular colours and over-painting of many of the houses are incompatible with the otherwise red brick simplicity of the rest of the houses, creating a sense of disharmony along the street. The line of trees minimises the sight and noise of the IDR and provide reasonable tree coverage in the summer but afford less coverage in winter. Recently re-painted, black cast-iron bollards line the street in front of the trees.



2, 4 and 4A (listed Georgian semi-detached) Howard Street showing the rustication on 4A (Google Maps)

Original iron railings and stuccoed separator wall from 16-22 Howard Street (Google Maps)



Terraces along the west side of Russell Street (nos. 38-42) with Regency window balconies

Georgian terraces along the west side towards Oxford Road with the Holy Trinity parish church at the end



48-50 Russell Street, Bath stone semi-detached, like those in Eldon Square



56 Russell Street (c.1850s-1870s) cream coloured brick detached house



The Nag's Head, Oxford Road,(c.1850-1870s) faux Tudor pub, multiple CAMRA Best Pub in Berkshire awards and a listed Asset of Community Value



The Presbytery (c.1890) at the northeast corner of Baker Street and Russell Street with attractive polychrome and wood detailing

The large Georgian terraces, located at the southern end of the west side of Russell Street, contribute significantly to the street's grand appearance. Most of these are in good condition and some are still retained as family homes. The listed 2-storey Georgian terraced properties between 6-14 have been adversely affected by buy-to-let investment, which has resulted in the poor maintenance of many of the properties. The removal of original windows at 14 and 16 are a regrettable blight on the terrace. The detached family house at 54 is notable for its light brick frontage and was built prior to 1853. The Bath stone faced, semi-detached houses at 48-50 Russell Street are striking and unique in the area with their imported Bath stone structures. They are of the same architects' work seen in Reading's Eldon Square Conservation Area where there are numerous houses that are of almost identical structure and style. The Kennet and Avon canal made Bath stone a prestigious alternative for housebuilding in the 1830-40s.

Notable smaller red brick family homes include those located diagonally across from each other at 36 and 41 Russell Street. 36 is in multiple occupancy but retains a very large original rear garden. 41 has been used as a local surgery for many years. The front garden walls have been retained in both cases.

The Parsonage at 32 Baker Street, is a fine late-Victorian house, which sides on to Russell Street. It has been the Vicarage for the Holy Trinity Parish and dates from c.1890. It has striking polychrome brick detailing and terracotta features and its front door, looking onto Baker Street, is set within an ornate late Victorian timber and tiled porch. Horizontal bars on the first-floor windows remain from the use of the upstairs room as a nursery. Improved landscaping could enhance the site.

The much larger later Victorian villas on the east side of Russell Street are in varying states of repair but many have attractive polychrome detailing and a number of original features, although unfortunately several façades have been over-painted.

The popular Nag's Head public house is a well-restored, faux-Tudor building and is listed as an Asset of Community Value.

The stuccoed, late-Georgian terrace at 37- 55 Baker Street built prior to 1833 are the oldest houses on the eastern part of that street along a portion of the street originally named Russell Terrace. Their poor condition belies their historical significance; the pioneer of early photography, Henry Fox Talbot had his 'Reading Establishment' studio at 55 Baker Street.

A mirrored pair of two-storey, semi-detached houses, with side doors are at 33-35 and are listed.



Fox Talbot's 'Reading Establishment' studio at 55 Baker Street.



The earliest set of houses on Baker Street from 33-35 (listed) and no. 55 Henry Fox Talbot's studio at the near end

23-31 Alexandra Terrace is a simple, red brick terrace with many original windows and details intact and dates from prior to c.1853; the property at 23 is in poor condition and 31 has seen a recent loss of its original windows.

Other buildings of note along Baker Street include the semi-detached Rednirt Villas, which are notable for their attractive stonework, and date from 1904.

The Oasis Community Centre dates from c.1850-1860s. It was a public house, inn and spirits retailer's warehouse in the late 1800s. A small area of surviving sett stones are located on the pavement in front of the original cast iron door opening for loading the cellar. Now well-restored and maintained by the Carey Baptist Church, it serves as a current asset to the local community. The remains of an advertising sign from the last decades of the 1800s proclaiming "Ferguson's Pale Ale, Stouts & Porter, Wine & Spirits" is located upstairs, along a brick wall that formed the exterior wall of the original building. The sign is currently covered by plasterboard.



Rednirt Villas 1904, developed by Mr. Trinder, bay windows, polychrome and stone work detailing



Detached house at no.14 with cottage-like Victorian frontage (Google Maps)



23- 31 Baker Street, Alexandra Terrace, c.1850-1870, red brick terrace, overall well-preserved with majority of original windows and doors intact



The Oasis Community Centre, c.1850s Inn and Public House



Frontages along Waylen Street's earliest houses c.1840



The poor conditions of the terraced housing along Zinzan Street with overhead wires, bins and satellite dishes. 26 Zinzan Street (to the left) is the only house with original windows still intact

Zinzan Street and Waylen Street were developed on market gardens once owned by Mrs. Zinzan. The majority of the houses date from prior to 1853 with infill a decade later. Many of the houses here have been adversely affected by intense and frequently insensitive HMO landlord investment and exhibit some of the worst degradation in the area. Overhead wires lead to multiple-occupation properties; excessive satellite dishes, wires and random utility pipes clutter façades. Front garden walls have been removed to create rubbish bin standings, which exacerbates the uneven frontage lines along the pavement. A good number of red brick façades have been painted over. The absence of green front gardens contributes to an austere streetscape view.

The regular appearance of 3-storey houses along Zinzan Street is virtually unbroken. Slight variations of poorly constructed dormer windows cause gaping along the otherwise continuous fine grain building line. There are still a small number of houses, 19, 23, 39, and 43, which have retained their Victorian iron railings. 43, 40-48, 39 and 45 still have their original curved entrance walls that separated front gardens from next door. A dropped granite kerb outside 8-10 Zinzan Street evidences the entrance to a former coach storage, in use until c.1910. A very rare kinkle – krankle wall separates 3 -5 Zinzan Street in the back garden and is worthy of heightened protection.

Waylen Street displays more variety in its housing stock, with houses varying from 2-3 storeys in height. The large late Victorian detached villa at no.16 is an attractive element in the street.

Numbers 5-15 form an impressive faux-Tudor terrace with many original doors and features, although they are in poor condition. The remainder of the street has been adversely affected by the very poor condition of the majority of the properties. As in Zinzan Street, this is the result of poor maintenance by landlords and the conversion to multiple-occupation. The multiple occupation properties at nos. 43-61 have identically painted brick façades and matching uPVC windows and doors that present a uniformly detracting appearance along the street. Many properties have also been extended into the back gardens to provide more housing. The small two-up/two-down houses from nos. 21- 27 are well-tended properties but the contemporary refacing of no. 21 in yellow stone clashes with and detracts from the historic facades. The modern Marlon housing development on the east side of the street at the Oxford Road replaced the once mighty Wesleyan Methodist Church. This modern development detracts from the historical understanding of the road; in addition, its location in the plot is inconsistent with front pavement lines of the historic properties and its large massing is incompatible with the scale of the street's dominant built environment.

Jesse Terrace, arguably the Jesse family's most impressive development, forms one of the finest streetscapes in the Conservation Area. The terraces date from c.1853 to mid-1870s and largely remain in single family occupation; only a few have been converted for multiple occupation and an Article 4 has been put in place to protect this balance. The houses have striking, uniform metal verandas on both sides of the street and, with few exceptions, well-tended front

gardens, original windows, doors and chimneys. An Article 4 direction, put in place in 2004, now protects the house façades from uncontrolled alterations.



The view up Jesse Terrace from Baker Street to Castle Hill

The centre of the east terrace, Jesse Terrace

Like Zinzan Street, piecemeal replacement of original features with modern materials has adversely affected houses on Carey Street. Original windows have been retained in houses at no. 13, and the upper floors of no. 15. Original cast iron railings remain at nos. 13 and 25. Chimneys and pots largely remain on the east side of the street, but the west side of the street has fewer and is an almost continuous run of over-painted brick façades. The Carey Baptist Church has an impressive polychrome frontage, is well maintained and provides a visual highlight on the street. Some interior details remain inside its main worship hall. The view to the backs of the large Georgian houses that front Castle Hill and the tall brick dividing wall along Carey Street is one of the more striking views from the street. The modern building at Wolford Hall that houses the Reading Association for the Blind is incompatible with the historic built environment of the area.



**Carey Baptist Church Chapel
with its polychrome frontage, 1869**

Anstey Road and Body Road were created around the turn of the 20th century, developed on open land belonging to the Carey Particular Baptist Chapel. The properties along the two roads are uniform and a good example of Reading's housing response at this time to provide attractive but economical accommodation for the average working family. The tri-colour polychrome two-up two-down terraced houses along Anstey Road's main corridor have bay fronted windows on the ground level. Houses along both sides of Body Road and along the southern end of Anstey Road all have identical layouts and dormers, accentuated with late

Victorian era detailed bargeboards. The recent red tile roof at 10 Body Road is incongruous among the slate roofs; this type of renovation may not have been permitted had it remained in the Conservation Area from 2004. Although less ornate than the area's 19th century predecessors, the original front garden railings remain at nos. 4, 8, 10, 14, 24, 32, 38 and 40. Unfortunately, many of the façades have been over-painted.

However, the houses all face onto a rare green space owned by the Carey Centre, which lends a welcome sense of openness rare to the Conservation Area. The trees that form a border along Body Road provide a pleasant, leafy backdrop to the edge of the conservation area and screens the area from the noise and pollution of the IDR.

Key Positive Characteristics

- A wide diversity of 19th century housing styles
- Jesse Terrace is an attractive and well-maintained street with strong local historical connections
- Henry Fox Talbot's 'Reading Establishment' studio at 55 Baker Street where *The Pencil of Nature* (the first book with mass-produced photographs) was produced
- Red brick Georgian terraces at 6-34 Russell Street, west side
- Georgian Bath stone semi-detached villas at 48-50 Russell Street
- The pre-1833 Georgian terrace at 33-55 Baker Street
- Alexandra Terrace at 23-31 Baker Street
- Carey Baptist Church
- Oasis Community Centre at the corner of Baker Street and Carey Street, which was a former pub
- Nag's Head, Russell Street, is an Asset of Community Value and a CAMRA award winner
- Rednirt Villas, Baker Street
- Parsonage at 32 Baker Street
- Original wrought iron railings at 16-22 Howard Street
- Open green space at Anstey Road and Body Road surrounding the Carey Centre
- Valuable green provided by trees along Howard Street and Body Road
- The rare kinkle – kinkle wall that separates 3-5 Zinzan Street in the back garden.

Negative Features

- The overall poor condition of much of the housing stock; notably on Zinzan Street, Waylen Street, Howard Street, the north end of Russell Street, Carey Street, Anstey Road and Body Road
- Poor condition of the public realm; excessive over-head wires; worn street signage; tarmac pavements and streets all exacerbate a bleak street appearance.
- ASB, including drug dealing and street drinking and pervasive crime in the area
- Poor definition of frontages to the pavement, including the removal of front railings and brick walls in several streets
- The creation of hard standings for bins in front gardens
- Excessive quantities of bins causing visual blight along streetscapes
- Frequent fly-tipping
- Proliferation of satellite dishes, and excessive and redundant wires and pipes on façades
- uPVC windows and non-traditional modern uPVC doors
- Over-painted brick, frequently hiding polychrome brick detailing
- Unsympathetic rendered façades at 21 Waylen Street and 8 Howard Street

- Brownfield site behind 55 Baker Street and open area accessed next to 26 Baker Street
- Walford Hall is an out-of-keeping modern building
- Poor condition of 5-15 Waylen Street, which is a large Victorian, mock-Tudor terrace
- Incompatible architecture to the rear of 139-141 Oxford Road, facing Russell Street
- Recent red tile roof at 10 Body Road
- Non-policy compliant estate agent signage is a constant in the area

Buildings presenting Opportunities for Enhancement

- Building of flats, back of 139-141 Oxford Road, facing Russell Street. Circa 2016.
- Building of flats, Waylen Street near the Oxford Road, Circa 1990-2000.
- Carey Centre, Anstey Road, Circa 1960-1970.
- Salvation Army, Anstey Road, Circa 1960-1990.
- Reading Association for the Blind, Walford Hall, Carey Street. Circa 1960-1970.
- Epping Close flats, Epping Close. Circa 1980-1990.
- Reading Tyres Ltd, 81 Russell Street. Circa ??
- Buildings of flats, 52-54 Russell Street. Circa 1960-1970.
- 11 Baker Street, Circa 1880- (negative rendering and redevelopment).
- 50 Zinzan Street, Circa 1840- (negative rendering and redevelopment.)

Buildings of townscape Merit:

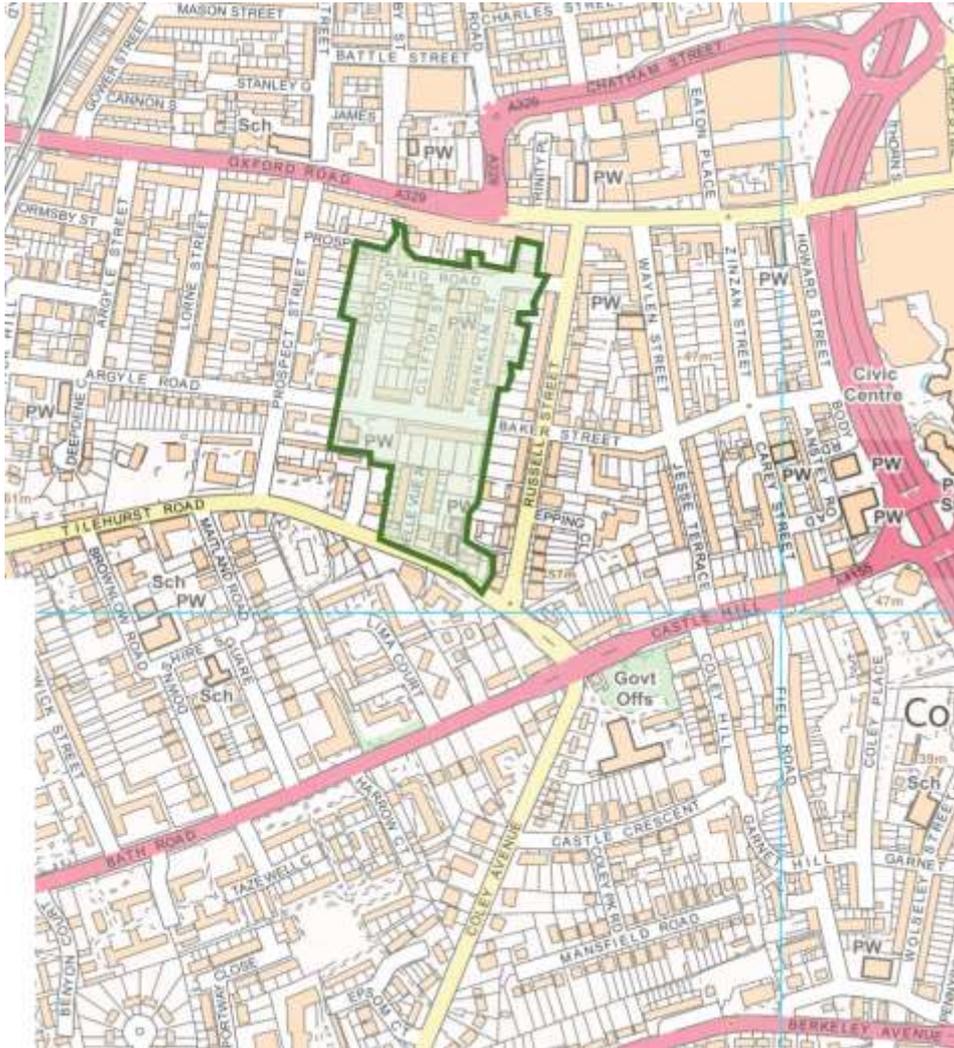
- 2 Howard Street, Circa 1850-1870.
- 14 Baker Street. Circa 1850-1870s.
- Terrace at 33-53 Baker Street. Circa 1820-1830s.
- Alexandra Terrace, 23-31 Baker Street. Circa
- The Oasis Community Centre, 21 Baker Street. Circa 1850-1860s.
- 1 Jesse Terrace. Circa 1850-1860.
- Jesse Terrace, east side Terrace 3-33. Circa 1850-1860s.
- 35 Jesse Terrace, circa 185-1860.
- Jesse Terrace, west side Terrace 8-30. Circa 1850-1860s.

Listed Buildings

- 6 to 22 Russell Street. Early 19C Georgian, terrace of nine houses which step down Russell Street in pairs, except for 6,8 and 10 which form a group of three. 2 storeys, plus attic and basement, red brick with stucco string course, arched ground floor windows, arched doorcases with patterned fan lights, slate roofs. 14 and 16 have recently had original windows removed.

- 24 to 34 Russell Street. Early- mid 19C, Georgian terrace of six houses which step down Russell Street in pairs, 34 has an extra bay. 3 storeys and basement, red brick with stucco string course, arched door openings with patterned fan lights of the period, slate roofs with ridge line chimney stacks. 24 and 28 have lost original second floor windows.
- 41 Russell Street, Surgery (E. side). Early- mid 19C, detached red brick symmetrical facade, hipped slate roof. Arched and recessed doorcase, wide traceried fanlight.
- 55 Baker Street. Circa 1840 and altered. 3 storeys, stucco with parapet and shallow pediment, semi-circular bay at first floor, windows with raised surrounds. Arched front door and adjoining arched window in panel. House was pioneer photographer Fox Talbot's 'Reading Establishment'.
- 36 Russell Street. Early-mid 19C, 2 storey detached house, brick with slate roof, stucco string course. 3 bays wide. Fanlight to door and delicate wire porch of curved gable design.
- 38 and 38A Russell Street. Early-mid 19C, 3 storeys and basement, red brick with stucco string course, flat eaves to hipped slate roof. 38 is 3 bays wide, arched openings to ground floor, wide fanlight and fluted columns to central doorcase. No 38A is one bay wide, slightly set back, with parapet.
- 40 and 42 Russell Street. Early-mid 19C pair of houses, 3 storeys and basement, red brick with stucco cornice and shallow pediment. No 40 has been recently and poorly rendered. Arched doorways with rusticated stucco recess. Elegant first floor cast iron railings.
- 44 and 46 Russell Street. Early-mid 19C pair of houses, 3 storeys and basement, red brick, stucco string course, hipped slate roofs. Elegant wide arched door cases with fanlights and fluted Doric columns. 46 has a one bay extension in good period style.
- 48 and 50 Russell Street. Circa 1840, pair of houses, 2 storeys with attic and basement. Bath stone, channelled ground floor, arched first floor windows, bracketed eaves and hipped slate roof. Cast iron railings of the period to ground floor. Entrance doors in set-back square bays to side.
- 4 and 4A Howard Street. 3 storey pair of houses, early 19C. Red brick, rendered parapet and ground floor, one with original rusticated stucco. Arched entrance doors and ground floor windows.

6.4 Streets west of Russell Street



Significance

The area west of Russell Street consists largely of 2-storey, terraced early Georgian housing, later polychrome patterned Victorian and Edwardian infill and, along Goldsmid Road, further 20th century infill. It is a quiet neighbourhood which, with its varied range of housing, sets it apart from other character areas.

Clifton Street and Franklin Street, sloping northwards from Baker Street, contain two back-to-back terraces of late Edwardian artisan housing with attractive polychrome brick detailing and patterning designed to run down the length of the terrace. The street pattern provides sweeping views northwards from points along Baker Street to the Caversham escarpment, which are highly valued views.

In the 1820s, Henry Pratt Swallow sold off his market gardening land in this area for housing development and created Prospect Street and Russell Street as the first two roads between Oxford Road and the Bath Road. Prospect Street retains a rare, simple, Georgian terrace of early 19th century artisan housing along its eastern side.

The infill streets of Franklin Street and Clifton Street were created where the villa of Westfield Grove and its large gardens stood during much of the 19th century. Berkshire's only purpose-built synagogue, with its distinctive Moorish-influenced architecture, Arts and Crafts detailing and cupola, is on Goldsmid Road at the bottom of Clifton Street.

The impressive terrace of early c.1820s listed Georgian houses on the south side of Baker Street retain original details and plan forms and are well maintained.

This combination of characteristics highlights this area's significance and special character, which reflects those of the Conservation Area as a whole.

Materials

The earliest homes in the area resonate with the red brick structure that is so common of Reading's Georgian buildings. Fan-light detailed doorways and traditional multi-glazed sash windows dominate those Georgian homes. However, the polychrome pattern detailing along the older terraces of Franklin Street and Clifton Street also gives the area its strong character. The

Views: (see Map in 4.2)

Views 10 and 20 are located within the Russell Street Character Area and evidence the residential expansion and growth of the Conservation Area over the centuries. The view east along Baker Street towards Russell Street (no. 10) is enhanced not only by the fine early Georgian terrace along the south side of the street but also by the view of the back of 36 Russell Street on the right - a house originally built as a two storey detached Georgian house, not dissimilar to the two storey detached Georgian house opposite it at 41 Russell Street, built c.1840.

View 20, looking north towards the large oak tree at the bend of the road, In Goldsmid Road the view of the remarkable oak tree sets off positively what is an otherwise quiet but more modern corner (mid 20th century) of the character area.

Area Analysis

The Georgian terrace of houses at 61-79 Baker Street were the first buildings constructed in the 1820s. The features of the terrace are notable, with retention of original windows and doors. The iron railings at no. 69 were recast from the original arrowhead railings that once existed along the terrace.

The National Spiritualist Church at 81 Baker Street, formerly York Lodge, is the only one remaining of three similarly scaled early 19th century villas. The surviving garden is a rare green space in the Conservation Area and the unique reminder of the unusual layout of these three villas: the entrance faces on to the garden not towards the road, with a drive leading from Baker Street.



The listed Georgian terraced houses from 61-79 Baker Street, complete with original doors and windows



The National Spiritualist Church, 81 Baker Street, listed- originally York Lodge, one of an early 19th century group of three villas

The one retained estate house in the area is Bellevue Villa located on Tilehurst Road, now functioning as a B and B. Its exterior is reasonably well maintained, although the front garden is given over to parking and could be more sensitively landscaped. It still retains original

windows and two Regency styled Coade stone decorative urns set on the roofline at each side.

The short, quiet cul-de-sac of Belle Vue Road, was created by the 1890's from the side garden of Bellevue Villa. Belle Vue Road is associated with two-up, two-down, terraced polychrome houses creating a harmonious effect along both sides of the road. Regrettably, some of the façades have been painted, disrupting the once continuous polychrome detailing along the street. However, original windows have been retained on several properties and the doorways have attractive stone-arched porches. There is still a fine high wall down the east side of Belle Vue Road separating the Villa from the development. At the far end of Belle Vue Road, the modern tarmac road surface has eroded to reveal several square metres of the original cobbles or sett stones, which were laid in a traditional fan pattern.



Belle Vue Road, (c.1880-90) small polychrome terrace with high wall separating the development from the original Bellevue Villa



Bellevue House, Tilehurst Road, currently functioning as a B&B

Both Franklin Street and Clifton Street were largely developed by the turn of the 20th century, created from the former villa and gardens of Westfield Grove. Faded 'ghost signage', painted high on the brick wall of 4 Russell Street at the junction with Goldsmid Road directs the visitor to Junction Road (the former name of Goldsmid Road), leading to Westfield Grove. The back-to-back terraces on the west side of Franklin Street and the east side of Clifton Street are separated by a small alleyway that is still in situ today. These terraces exemplify the style of polychrome brick terraced housing that formed part of the rapid growth along the residential streets to the west in order to house the increasing populations employed in local industries. Regrettably, some of the brickwork has been painted breaking the harmony of the polychrome detailing along the terrace's façade.

The circa 1980s housing along the east side of Franklin Street was built in the back gardens of the properties along Russell Street, is generally in keeping with the scale and materials of the buildings throughout the rest of the character area. Multi-coloured brick embellishment on most of the buildings pays homage to the polychrome detailing of the earlier terrace on the west side of the street. However, front gardens turned over to parking have created a regrettably irregular pavement line and a very tarmacked appearance to east side of the street that could be improved with landscaping. The west side of Clifton Street is largely mid 20th century terraced and semi-detached housing. Here, intact front walls and regular pavement lines preserve the finer street grain better than the irregularly fronted east side of Franklin Street does.

The 3-storey terrace at 36-48 Baker Street, between Clifton Street and Goldsmid Road, were built c.1880-90. The terrace has subtle grey end brick linear detailing to the front and sides. The high brick walls of the back gardens and the tall chimney stacks are attractive and remarkably intact, thus worthy of retention. Regrettably, uPVC windows, satellite dishes, antennas and painted trim proliferate and detract from the street view of the terrace.



Terraced housing on Franklin Street with the diamond shape polychrome designs between the houses



Terraced polychrome houses along Clifton Street, the set to the south with double bay fronts

Reading Synagogue in Goldsmid Road is listed in recognition of its significance and high quality. It dates from 1900 and is a fine expression of Moorish design in polychrome brickwork and stone, topped with a wood and lead cupola. Whilst the original synagogue is one the Conservation Area's finest buildings, the modern Sr Herman Gollancz Hall attached to the original building, facing Clifton Street is out-of-keeping stylistically, and if redevelopment were to take place on the site, a building more respectful of the impressive structure that it is attached to would be advised.

The largest and finest tree in the character area is located at the right-angle bend in Goldsmid Road. It is a large oak, safeguarded by a TPO, which provides attractive green and shade at the corner and anchors the corner bend of Goldsmid Road with its restrained, well-maintained 20th century housing.

There are limited examples of original street furniture. There is one, converted, example of Reading's original gas lamp posts on Franklin Street. Regrettably, two of the three original cast iron gas lamp posts were removed in 2018 along Goldsmid Road.



Listed Moorish style synagogue with brick and stone detailing and imaginative bell tower



Large TPO oak at the corner of Goldsmid Road

Key Positive Characteristics

- Synagogue in Goldsmid Road
- Listed Georgian terrace at 61-79 Baker Street, which is in fine condition
- York Lodge, National Spiritualist Church, and its large front garden at 81 Baker Street
- Georgian artisan houses at 1-9 Prospect Street and at Prospect Mews

- Polychrome patterned terraces on Clifton Street and Franklin Street
- Views to the Caversham escarpment from Baker Street
- Belle Vue Road with its intimate feel and patch of exposed sett stones
- Large oak tree at the bend of Goldsmid Road, safeguarded by a TPO
- High brick walls of the gardens behind 36-48 Baker Street
- Original alley behind the Clifton Street/ Franklin Street polychrome terraces
- Converted original gas lamp post on Franklin Street; the only one remaining

Negative Features

- Modern meeting hall attached to the Synagogue
- Overpainting of polychrome houses destroying the brick patterning
- Poor condition of 1-9 Prospect Street
- Crime and ASB along Prospect Street in the immediate area of Oxford Road
- Poor condition of 48 Baker Street and overpainting and dropped kerb front parking at 46 Baker Street
- Overhead wires blight the view towards Caversham
- Rubbish bins, which block pavements on Franklin Street and Clifton Street
- Poor tarmac pavements and poor condition of the streets
- Limited original street furniture

Buildings presenting Opportunities for Enhancement

- Four semi-detached houses. 1 Tilehurst Road, Circa 1970
outside Character Area but with direct adverse impact:
- Nicholas Court, Baker Street, Circa 1970s.*
- Alexander Court, Baker Street, Circa 1970s.*
- Branksome Court buildings, Baker Street/Prospect Street, Circa 1970- 1980.*

Buildings of Townscape Merit:

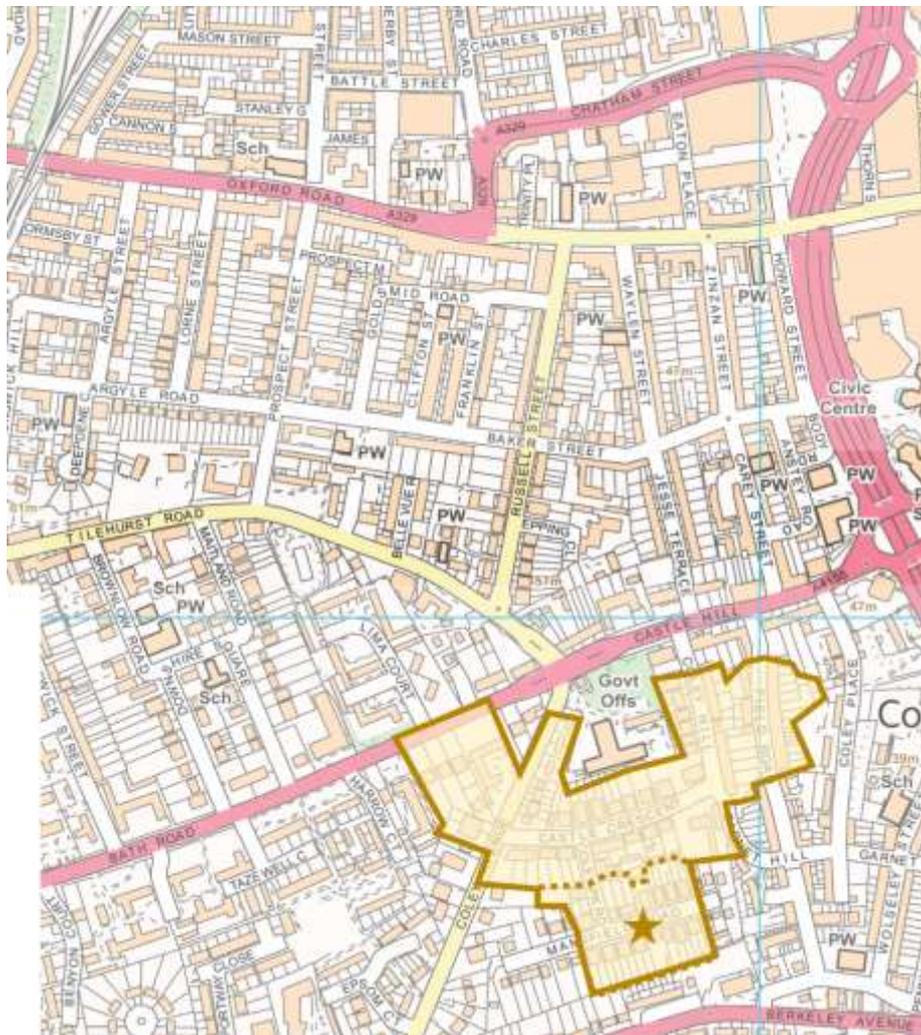
- Belle Vue House, 2 Tilehurst Road, Circa 1830-1850.
- Terrace, 1- 9 Prospect Street. Circa 1820-1830.
outside Character Area but with direct adverse impact:
- Nicholas Court, Baker Street, Circa 1970s.*
- Alexander Court, Baker Street, Circa 1970s.*
- Branksome Court buildings, Baker Street/Prospect Street, Circa 1970- 1980
- 54 Russell Street, Circa 1840-1850.

Listed Buildings

- Reading Synagogue, Goldsmid Road. 1900, red brick with decorative brick, stone dressings and window columns, slate roof, gabled ends. In a Byzantine style, some elements such as coloured glass and cupola have arts and crafts influence.
- 61 to 79 Baker Street. Early 19C Georgian terrace of nine houses, 2 stories and basement, set back from road with front gardens. Red brick with slate roofs, arched doorcases with radiating fanlights. A complete and homogenous group.

- 81 Baker Street, York Lodge, part of the Reading National Spiritualist Church. Early 19C detached house set back from road, 2 storeys, red brick with hipped slate roof. Semi-circular porch with Ionic columns.

6.5 Castle Crescent and streets south of Castle Hill



Significance

This character area is an open, leafy suburban environment consisting of prosperous villas in large gardens and an eastern area consisting of continuous terraces. The houses of the Castle Crescent area are generally attractive although varied in appearance, massing and height, with a wide range from Georgian to late Victorian and Edwardian. Small sections of late 20th century infill dotted along Coley Hill and Field Road are incompatible with the earlier housing but do not unduly affect the character area.

The area benefits from its location atop the chalk escarpment above the river bed to the south east. The area is contained geographically by limited access points via Castle Hill and Castle Crescent through to Coley Avenue. This provides a sense of seclusion from the more intensively developed and busier parts of the Conservation Area. Consequently, despite the mix of building periods, the area has a tranquil, pleasant and unified appeal. These characteristics contribute to its significance as a distinctive and separate character area.

Materials

The use of red brick is dominant along Coley Avenue and in the Georgian terraces of Coley Hill. Parti-coloured polychrome brick in grey, blue, tan and red is used throughout the area notably along the well- maintained terraces along the east side of Field Road, the north side of Castle Crescent, and Mansfield Road.

Stucco is the more dominant facing material on houses along the southern side of Castle Crescent and on some of the Georgian period properties on Coley Hill. Stone detailing for doors and window cills are common throughout the character area no matter the time period of the property. Modern infill properties are often faced with stucco and exposed red brick combinations.

Views: (see Map in 4.2)

Views 14, 16, 18, 19 and 21 are located within Castle Hill/Castle Street Crescent Character Area, which evidence some of the most architecturally interesting buildings in the Conservation Area. The area is noteworthy for its Georgian terraces and Victorian villas.

View 14 is a view into the front garden of Yeomanry House, which is currently undergoing development into a nursery.



Yeomanry House at view 14

View 16 looks north down on to Castle Hill from Coley Hill. The view includes the Georgian terraces of the side street and the larger Georgian house villas of Castle Hill including Heritage Court.

There are many numerous vantage points in the Castle Crescent character area of the large late Victorian villas in the area; two views are of particular note.



Late Victorian Houses along the north side of Castle Crescent (view 18)



Georgian Houses along the south side of Castle Crescent to the right (view 18)

View 18 looking east along Castle Crescent from Coley Avenue, with illustrates the way the view unfolds along curve in the road with large Victorian villas on the north side of the street and Georgian properties on the south side of the street.

Character Areas: Castle Crescent and streets south of Castle Hill

View 19 from Castle Crescent down Coley Park Road and towards the villas of Mansfield Road is an attractive view showing the further extension of the styling onto the next road.

Views 3a and 3b are wide sweeping easterly views from the higher level area of Coley Hill and Castle Crescent. They encompass an important view out over the Holy Brook and the River Kennet towards London Street and the Katesgrove area of Reading. These views illustrate a strong sense of openness, together with leafy green and expansive open sky, punctuated with the spires of the mediaeval St. Giles Church and Christ Church (c.1862) that highlight the views. These views are worthy of protection under an historical view policy.

View 4 both south and north along Coley Avenue into and out of the Conservation Area is now a protected view within the Draft plan expected to be formally adopted in 2019 by Reading Borough Council. The road once formed the private drive to Coley House and the Coley Park Estate, as shown on the Coates' map of 1802 which also shows the road already lined with trees as it is today. The current trees along the route were planted in 1905 and replaced the earlier tall and overgrown trees.



Allée of trees along Coley Avenue looking north into the Conservation Area (view 4a and 4b)

View 5a looks west along the Bath Road towards the Downshire Square Conservation Area from the junction of Castle Hill, Russell Street, Coley Avenue and Bath Road. The view of Downshire Square Conservation Area is screened by the largest collection of fine, mature trees within the Conservation Area. Twenty of these mature trees are protected by TPO status.



Looking west along the Bath Road (view 5a)

Area Analysis

Coley Avenue is the earliest route off the Bath Road and originally carried the traveler south to the impressive Coley Manor beyond Berkeley Avenue. Coley Avenue was developed with an impressive allée of trees lining the road in the late 18th century. After having been a replanting in the early 20th century, the striking trees survive today. The avenue of trees, the attractive high brick walls, and detached houses within large front gardens provides a striking historic view south from the Castle Hill and Coley Avenue junction and the Coley Avenue and Bath Road junction.

Coley Hill dates to circa 1820s, with a fine varied Georgian terrace along the east side of the street. There are several terraced groups of 2-3 storey listed houses, predominantly in brick, though some have rendered stucco façades. Many of the houses have original railings, arched Georgian windows and original doors, that strengthen the visual strength of the east side of the street. The preservation of these details is becoming more challenging as HMO use along the street is becoming more common. A lone, modern, well-kept two-storey detached house in the middle of the Georgian terraces is incompatible and disrupts the harmony along the east side of the street. The modern infill along the west side is quite incongruous with the Georgian side, and more sensitive re-development of the west side in the future could significantly improve the overall character of the street.

Wide vistas over the Katesgrove area and its two historic church spires are afforded from the edge of the escarpment at Coley Hill and Castle Crescent, although private fencing limits this view from Coley Hill. It would be desirable if this view (3A) could be more easily accessible to the public.



31-35 Coley Hill Georgian terrace. 1820-30s



Arched windows and fanlights on Georgian houses, Coley Hill

Number 3 Castle Crescent, dates from c. 1835-1840, and is notable for the size of its intact original garden area. Several TPO trees screen the western perimeter at the rear of the site. Despite building additions to the plot layout and additions to the house, it remains one of only a few substantial detached villas within the Conservation Area whose grounds reflect their original extent.



3 Castle Crescent c. 1840, in process of restoration

The properties on Castle Crescent and Mansfield Road date from c. 1880-1900, and are noted for their impressive grouping of large, late Victorian villas, each detailed with polychrome, stone, and tile embellishments. Many are in multiple occupancy and numerous front gardens have given way to off-road parking. However, the properties have been well-managed and maintained, affording the streets grand appearances. Multiple occupancy has not detracted from the streetscape in this area as significantly as other parts of the Conservation Area.

High red brick walls are located along Coley Park Road, which links Mansfield Road to Castle Crescent. The modern infill along this short road is of a sensitive design in terms of massing, materials and detailing and the brick walls help to harmonise the modern and historic built environment. The historic brick walls, both high and low, that are located along Coley Avenue, Castle Crescent, Mansfield Road and Coley Park Road unify the appearance of the entire area and contribute to the area's elegant appearance. The view to the east from the entirety

Character Areas: Castle Crescent and streets south of Castle Hill

of Mansfield Road along the high point of the escarpment affords a view of the steeple at St. Giles Church in Katesgrove. [\(view XX\)](#)

The small, artisan terraces along the east side of Field Road date to circa 1900 and their façades are decorated with three distinct polychrome colour patterns. The terrace is unpainted, attractive and well maintained, despite an almost total loss of original windows. The polychrome brick patterning is worthy of protection. The modern housing and business premises detract from this view along the west side of the street. There is a notable view from Field Road up to the gardens and backs of the large Georgian terraces along Coley Hill along the edge of the chalk and clay ridge, because these curtilages have been subjected to minimal interventions(view XX ADD!).

5, 7 and 9 Bath Road, date from c.1880-90 and were incorporated into the Conservation Area in the 2004 Appraisal. Each has a similar appearance to the villas of the same time period on Castle Crescent. The houses are set back from Bath Road, with a similar alignment to that of the streetline during the mid 19th century. These properties have attractive, deep front gardens with striking trees that are safeguarded by TPO's.

The listed building at the south east corner of the junction of Castle Crescent and Coley Avenue functions as a B&B but is poorly maintained. The mid-20th century Berkeley Court opposite, is set well back in an attractively kept garden. Its rear portion is the former entrance of an earlier manor house on the site. Newer windows detract from its otherwise attractive mid-20th century design, which is unique to the area.



Polychrome houses along the north side of Castle Crescent



Polychrome, tile and terracotta detailed houses along Mansfield Road



Large polychrome villas set back amongst striking trees, Bath Road



The mid 20th century Berkeley Court, Coley Avenue

Key Positive Characteristics

- The historic allée of trees and the brick walls along Coley Avenue
- The Georgian terraced housing along the east side of Coley Hill
- The villas of Castle Crescent and Mansfield Road, which date from c.1880-1900
- The unpainted, well-maintained polychrome brick terrace on Field Road, east side
- Notable historic brick walls around the area, both tall boundary walls and lower frontage walls
- The large trees, TPO safeguarded, in front of the late Victorian villas at 3-7 Bath Road
- The view out over Katesgrove from the corner of Coley Hill and Castle Crescent
- The mid-20th century Berkeley Court

Negative features

- Incompatible modern development along the west sides of Field Road and Coley Hill
- Tarmac pavements throughout the area
- Poor public realm: street lighting and erratically placed street furniture
- Poor quality front garden boundaries and bins at 3, 5, 21 and 23 Coley Hill
- Bins in front gardens on the east side of Field Road
- Loss of front gardens for parking along Castle Crescent and Mansfield Road
- Excessive and redundant overhead wires detracting from open sky views
- Loss of original slate roofs and chimneys, replacement of original doors and windows by uPVC windows and doors in some properties
- Poor condition of the listed building and its grounds at 3 Castle Crescent

Buildings presenting Opportunities for Enhancement

- Coley Hill Court, XX Coley Hill, Circa 1980-1990

Buildings of Townscape Merit

- Terraces, 3-49 Field Road, Circa

Listed Buildings:

- 3 to 13 Coley Hill. Circa 1840. Stepped terrace of six houses. 3 storeys and basement. Red brick. Stucco cornice, string course and window surrounds. Slate roof. Some railings. 3 and 5 have lost details and been rendered since the listing notes were prepared.
- 15, 15A, 17, 17A Coley Hill. Circa 1840. An irregular, elegant pair of 2 storey buildings. Red brick with stucco string, slate roof, arched openings to ground floor.
- 21 to 25 Coley Hill. Circa 1840. Terrace of three houses, 3 storeys and basement. Red brick terrace, 21 and 23 painted. Slate roof. Arched ground floor windows with ogee pattern glazing.
- 27 Coley Hill. Early 19C. Symmetrical 3 storey house. Red brick, stucco strings, slate roof. Arched ground floor openings. Later porch.
- 29 Coley Hill. Early 19C. 2 storeys. Red brick, slate roof. Arched openings to ground floor.
- 31 to 35 Coley Hill. Mid 19C. Terrace of three houses, 3 storeys and basement. Red brick. Ground floor stucco also first floor window surrounds. Hipped slate roof. Blind boxes.

Negative features, issues and opportunities for enhancement: Maintenance and intensified use of private properties

- 3 Castle Crescent. Mid 19C. 2 storey villa. Stucco with quoins, mouldings to windows. Doric portico. 2 storey wing to left, bay to right. Hipped slate roof. Grounds developed.
- 29 to 35 Castle Crescent. Circa 1840. Terrace of four houses. 35 now a hotel with loss of original windows. 3 storeys, end houses gabled and set forward. Stucco with slate roof. Parapet to Coley Avenue side of 35. Forms a group with 21 to 27.

7. Negative features, issues and opportunities for enhancement

7.1 Maintenance and intensified use of private properties

A large number of period properties, mostly within the private rented sector, show signs of neglect, overcrowding or unsympathetic management. This has manifested itself in:

- loss of architectural detail and features (front brick walls, fencing, chimneys, etc.)
- inappropriately rendered and painted brick façades
- satellite dishes, sometimes multiple dishes, erected on facades
- untidy or excessive cabling, wiring and pipework on façades
- high numbers of household waste bins in front gardens in certain streets frequently overflowing or otherwise unsightly
- household waste bins kept on public pavements.
- fly-tipping of bulky items from outside the area and a transient rental population

7.2 Streetscape Environment and Public Realm

As noted in the last appraisal in 2004, many streets in the Conservation Area retain their 19th century granite kerbs and stone gutters. It was also noted that the majority of the paving was of modern tarmac and this continues to be the case today. The replacement of concrete stone slabs along the Oxford Road from a past improvements programme have led to a particularly unattractive patchwork effect on the south side of the road with tarmac replacing stone slabs as they've been pulled out for repairs. As with any heritage area, tarmac tends to have a blighting effect on a conservation area

Street furniture does now include cast iron bollards, notably in Howard Street and along Oxford Road, but the design and quality of modern public lamp posts and litter bins in the Conservation Area is unsympathetic and tends to clutter and detract from the local character rather than harmonise with it.

Excessive and unsightly overhead wires of telecommunications utilities blight streetscape views and the wires appear in many cases to be redundant. This is especially notable in streets where there is heavy HMO occupation.

The recent loss of two original cast iron lamp posts in the area, on Goldsmid Road, is regrettable and only one converted original gas lamppost remains in the Conservation Area on Franklin Street. This is an area, in early discussions, that may easily be able to be improved with funding by possibly replacing modern streetlighting with recently removed converted gas lampposts from around Reading.

7.3 Crime and Antisocial Behaviour (ASB)

Parts of the Conservation Area, notably in Character Areas 2 and 3, continue to have unsettling levels of higher than average crime and ASB. This is an issue which is a difficult problem for the Conservation Area itself. Within the Conservation Area generally:

- graffiti on telecom cabinets, private walls and buildings is ongoing and difficult to control

Negative features, issues and opportunities for enhancement: Threats to Views and Vistas in and out of the Conservation Area

- open and frequent drug- dealing and drug taking on the streets and related ASB is a common visual blight on streetscape views.
- broken windows and damaged architectural elements such as front garden wall collapses are frequently the results of ASB within the area.
- the level of crime and disorder is off-putting to a wide range of residents in viewing the area as a desirable one to live in or to move into
- levels of crime cause frequent refusals by many good quality contractors to undertake work within the area for fears of safety. This has lead to the common employment of cheaply priced contractors with no understanding of historic property work for repairs and conversions.

7.4 Threats to Views and Vistas in and out of the Conservation Area

The hilly topography of parts of the Conservation Area, and the grid pattern of the streets, provide some notable views. Tall tower blocks along the Caversham Road and Chatham Place corridors could negatively affect important heritage views out of the Conservation Area both looking north to the Caversham escarpment and east towards the town centre.

7.5 Opportunities for enhancement

The Conservation Area has been listed on Historic England's Heritage 'At Risk' register as of November 2018 due to long term situations involving loss of character within the area. While all character areas within the Conservation Area have issues which have contributed to this listing, the Oxford Road Character Area 2 and the Russell Street and Streets East Character Area 3 have the most serious issues.

The Oxford Road is a prime area that needs to be addressed in terms of enhancement and the promotion of the unique heritage character of the street. The area is presently blighted by neglected or unsympathetic retail fronts and building façades, poor boundary treatments and a poor public domain presentation (i.e. street furniture and paving, signage).

The Russell Street and Streets East Character Area suffers overall from the effects of a high level use of the residential properties as HMOs and the lack of care and maintenance by some of the owners. This has led to unsightly front gardens, boundary treatment loss, pipes, wires, and satellite dishes on façades and excess rubbish bins in gardens and on the streets. The public realm is also suffering from issues such as out-of-keeping conversions, poor quality pavements (tarmac), out of keeping modern street lighting and overhead wires in this area. An enhancement of character within the public and private sectors would be welcomed within this character area in particular.

Throughout the entire Conservation Area opportunities should be taken to address, prevent and reduce the following blights which are superficial in many cases and have the ability to be improved upon.

- excessive cabling/satellite dishes/pipework on house fronts
- insensitive painting/rendering/cladding of house fronts
- replacement of original doors and windows by Upvc substitutes
- loss of front boundary railings walls and fences
- Loss of chimney stacks on residential and commercial properties
- unkempt waste management on domestic and commercial properties
- high quantities of domestic and commercial waste bins kept on public pavements and in front gardens

- frequent fly-tipping of large items due to high turn-over of residents
- excessive/redundant overhead wiring by telecom utilities
- Use of tarmacadam for surfacing street pavements
- Uneven, patchworked appearance of pavements and streets
- Redundant and excessive street signage
- Unsympathetic street lighting fixtures
- poorly maintained and graffitied appearance of walls and on-street telecom cabinets
- unduly prolonged display of estate agents' signage

These blights, common throughout the Conservation Area, are addressed in the Action Plan set out in Section 8.

Many of the streets would benefit from the application of Article 4 Directions in conjunction with Local Development Orders to reduce the loss of character by bringing important character features within planning control. In other cases, such as those of satellite dishes and estate agent signage, protocols are already in place but breaches need improved means of detection and enforcement.

Finally, in consideration of the Conservation Area being on the Historic England 'Heritage At Risk' register, increased vigilance is called for in the appraisal of planning applications and Building Control measures within the Area to prevent or control the loss of character and architectural balance within the area and to achieve enhancement where possible and appropriate.

7.6 Sites presenting opportunities for enhancement

Sites presenting Opportunities for Enhancement:

The sites outlined in each character area section identified as currently having a negative impact on the character of the Conservation Area, each present an "opportunity for enhancement." Where possible, mitigation measures such as improved landscaping or sympathetic in-keeping redevelopment should be taken when opportunities present themselves to reduce this negative impact at the first available opportunity. In the case of these sites coming forward for redevelopment, development proposals should be expected to adhere to policy guidelines for the protection and enhancement of conservation areas.

8. Action Plan

8.1 Community engagement with the Council

The 2004 appraisal concluded with this call for community engagement:

'Whilst the Council can initiate improvements and control new development, the co-operation and enthusiasm of local residents and business owners provides a vital constituent to the future successful management of the conservation area. This means that local residents, tenants and other property owners need to work with the Council and agree common aims and objectives. Hopefully, this [2004] appraisal will provide a framework for a positive partnership for mutual future benefit.'

During the intervening years since 2004, the Council has been seeking to develop that positive partnership with local property owners and neighbourhood community groups. In 2012, Ward Councillors encouraged the formation of the Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association [BSANA] which promotes and coordinates community engagement in the Conservation Area's most blighted streets, lying to the north of Castle Hill.

In 2016 the Council endorsed the setting up of the Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee [CAAC] whose aims include making proposals for the enhancement and the general care and maintenance of Conservation Areas.

In 2018, the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area was recorded by Historic England on their ‘Heritage at Risk’ register, acknowledging ongoing issues that have been difficult, with limited resources, to reverse. Although community engagement measures have proceeded well with the Council's efforts, this alone has not been the universal cure to reversing the issues which have led to the Conservation Area's decline over recent decades. It has become clear that special measures are necessary to protect the historic environment from further decline.

By acknowledging the area to be ‘At Risk’, the Council has taken the recommended proactive step, opening opportunities for funding and increased community and business engagement to promote both the preservation and enhancement of the Conservation Area.

The action plan in the 2004 appraisal consisted of recommendations relating to removal of permitted development rights by Article 4 Direction, improvements to the public realm, and the application of existing policies to secure gradual improvement to shop fronts along the Oxford Road. Those recommendations have been reviewed and carried forward more extensively in the community-engaged Action Plan set out in Tables 1 and 2.

8.2 Big Picture Actions involving the “at Risk” Conservation Area

A change of name to the Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area

In the proposal of new boundary changes for the area and the incorporation of the Oxford Road up to the railway bridge, this appraisal has acknowledged that the history of the Area is inexorably linked to both the Castle Street/Castle Hill route and the Oxford Road as they supplied the structure for the connector roads of Prospect Street and Russell Street to be developed in early in the 19c. The remainder of the streets in the northern part of the Conservation Area developed over that century laid out the plan form for the street pattern for the housing that quickly followed. It is the understanding of this critical development pattern and integral relationship that is the backbone in understanding what the Conservation Area is about. This will enable a clear understanding for the town of the structure and significance of this first residential suburb to the west of Reading's town centre. It would be hoped that the requisite sign changes that would need to occur could be undertaken through outside funding streams designated to improve the Conservation Area.

Seeking funding for Improvements to the Public Realm, Streetscapes and Properties

In listing the Conservation Area on the Heritage at Risk listing, funding streams not otherwise available become possibilities. Funds from Historic England's Heritage Streets funds are considered possibilities. In November 2018, the Council appropriated £50,000 of optional placement CIL funding to the improvement of “conservation areas within the town centre,” largely with this Conservation Area in mind. It is envisioned that these funds can be used for match funding in looking for funds to enhance the Conservation Area. Initial thoughts are to focus on Oxford Road improvements to the streetscape and in working with retail shops to improve frontages. Such improvements are likely to have a positive knock-on effect for the streets directly off of the Oxford road as a result. A reclaimed gas lamppost replacement scheme to improve street furniture within the area is a possibility as well as street signage replacements if a name change to the Conservation Area is carried forward as a result of this appraisal. An outdoor museum exploring the different styles of housing in the microcosm of the area would be of true benefit to both local residents school groups and visitors to the town.

Establishing Management Plans with the Council and Community Groups

The Conservation Area is one that should be able to continue to enhance the understanding and appreciation of Reading's 19th century residential growth and development in the future. However, in acknowledging the Conservation Area as the asset that it is, this appraisal also acknowledges its current problems and vulnerabilities. Without the mutual corporation of the LPA and engaged community groups improvements to its current “at Risk” state will not be

possible. In section 8 an initial action list has been initiated, which as with any project of this magnitude will evolve constantly and need regular review and adjustments.

Certain LPAs throughout the country have found the formation of a structured working relationship with engaged community groups to be beneficial in putting in place actions that ultimately lead to conservation area improvements, and this the removal of the area from the "at Risk" register.

As funding is found, more specific management and action plans for specific areas should include public realm inventories, private property inventories and retail frontage inventories to acknowledge current situations and to identify specific improvements that can be made.

Article 4 expansion

This reappraisal reaffirms the recommendation of the use of Article 4 Directions as noted in the 2004 appraisal. It notes that the two subsequent Article 4 Directions placed in Jesse Terrace have had good effect on the street. As such, this has had the effect of creating a very notable difference between the houses of that street and Waylen Street just opposite it on Baker Street.

Since the last appraisal, the implementation of the 2013 Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act has relaxed planning restrictions in Conservation Areas, which has caused intensified and noticeable harm to the Conservation Area, (for example: noticeable in the loss of front garden boundaries and the creation of hard standings for bins It is highly likely that without additional measures, the Conservation Area will be at greater risk of losing the detail and character that makes it special.

In 2018, the Government also announced the allowance of fee collections to be paid to the LPA for planning applications within Article 4 Direction areas which relaxes to some degree, the difficulty in applying Article 4 Directions within conservation areas for resource-limited LPAs.

Recently, the use of Article 4s linked to Local Development Orders (LDOs) have been effective in the restoration of character within beleaguered conservation areas. Reading's new draft Local Plan has recommended the possible use of such daisy-chained documents. LDOs exempt the need for planning applications if the renovation meets certain pre-determined parameters of development or acceptable renovations, lightening the quantity of planning applications. (e.g.: the replacement of a 4 -panelled wooden front door would not need permission in street where they are considered to be in-keeping with the character of the area.)

The use of Article 4 Directions is largely recommended where there are acknowledged, sustained and on-going issues with the loss of character or detailing. In analysing the issues within the area, it is seen that there are many streets that could benefit the Conservation Area as a whole substantially from the application of Article 4 Directions/LDOs.

It is the duty of this appraisal to recommend those solutions for the management of the Conservation Area that would enhance and regenerate it and ultimately remove it from the "at Risk" register. Article 4 Directions remain the primary tool the Government grants to retain character in conservation areas, to do this. As such and as within the 2004 appraisal, the recommendation of their use is one that must be reiterated and indeed expanded.

As LDOs are more street specific there would need to be multiple LDOs for the area, likely following patterns of the individual character areas or housing periods.

The streets that this appraisal recommends for the application of Article 4 Directions and LDOs are at this time:

Howard Street, Body Road, Anstey Road, Carey Street, Zinzan Street, Waylen Street, sections of Baker Street, Tilehurst Road, Belle Vue Terrace, Russell Street, Prospect Street and the Oxford Road.

8.3 Action Tables

Policies, attitudes and actions which need to be applied to all of Reading's Conservation Areas if the town's remaining historic character is to be protected and enhanced as it should be. These actions were spelled out in the St Peters Conservation Area and apply to all conservation areas within the town, particularly with regard to the careful protection of architectural detail in any building alterations.

Noting however, the situation with the Conservation Area having been included on the 2018 Historic England "at risk" register, responsible agents and timetables are only suggested and not agreed upon at this time. It is hoped that through grant funding and future funding schemes that timetables can begin to be secured to right some of the worst issues within the Conservation Area.

Table 1 – All Conservation Areas (a Borough wide response for all Conservation Areas)

ISSUE	ACTION	SUGGESTED RESPONSIBLE AGENTS	SUGGESTED TIMESCALE
Loss of original architectural features and details (see 7.1). Insensitive change and development not requiring planning permission, permitted development	<p>Guidance: Provide guidance document on 'approved' methods for common small scale alterations.</p> <p>Awareness: Provide householder information on the added value of 'period detail' and detail on economic alternatives for energy efficiency savings</p>	RBC and CAAC	Within 1 year
Loss or change to original boundary features (walls and railings see 7.2)	<p>Awareness: Provide householder information document on the added value and visual importance of boundary walls and railings</p>	RBC and CAAC	Within 1 year

ISSUE	ACTION	SUGGESTED RESPONSIBLE AGENTS	SUGGESTED TIMESCALE
Insensitive development undertaken without permission (see 7.1 e.g. window replacement in listed buildings)	<p>Guidance: Provision of property owner guidance on legal requirements for alterations/development/treeworks in conservation areas.</p> <p>Enforcement: Legal enforcement by RBC to secure reversal of changes</p>	RBC and CAAC RBC	Within 1 year Immediate and ongoing
Redevelopment within or adjoining the Conservation Area should respect the general height, massing and alignment of existing buildings and use a palette of materials which reflect its existing character (see 7.6)	<p>Guidance, Policy: Supplementary Design guidance planning document for development in historic areas. Support: Use CAAC to gain informed comment on planning applications affecting Conservation Areas</p>	RBC and CAAC	Within 1 year Immediate and ongoing
Poor street furniture, clutter and surfacing (see 7.3 and 7.5)	<p>Training/Awareness: Council officers responsible for street signage, furniture and repair should have appropriate guidance on their impact on the Conservation Area and take this into account in planned maintenance</p>	RBC	Within 1 year

Table 2 – The Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area specifically

At this time, there is no agreement to date or ownership of the actions and

ISSUE	ACTION	SUGGESTED RESPONSIBLE AGENTS	SUGGESTED TIMESCALE
Overarching Recommendations:			
The Conservation Area should be extended in accordance with the recommendations in the boundary review	Adoption: Approve extension of Conservation Area	RBC	During 2019
Risk of neighbouring tall building development adversely impacting views and character of the Conservation Area	Consultation: Public consultation, Environmental Surveys, Historic England input (Urban Panel), Design Review Panel,	RBC, CAAC, BSANA, HE	Ongoing
Planning and Enforcement:			
Need for improved enforcement for Listed Building and Conservation Area infractions	Enforcement: Increased detection and enforcement, funding for Council resourcing	RBC, CAAC, BSANA	Ongoing
Loss of architectural detail and features (front brick walls, fencing, windows, doors, chimneys, etc.)	Development Control: Article 4 Direction with Local Development Orders (LDOs) need to be put in place in multiple areas of the Conservation Area	RBC	Directions and LDOs promoted and confirmed by January 2021
The preservation of brickwork, especially polychrome patterned brickwork, of individual houses and terraces	Development Control: Article 4 Directions plus LDOs	RBC	Directions and LDOs promoted and confirmed by January 2021
Unconsented alterations to roofs, including removing chimneys, changing roof materials and installing highway-facing Velux roof-lights visible from a public highway including footpaths	Community Involvement: Increased detection Enforcement: enforcement	BSANA, CAAC, RBC	Ongoing
Building a front porch	Development Control: Article 4 Directions and enforcement	RBC	Directions promoted and confirmed by January 2021
Loss of front boundary walls and railings	Development Control: Article 4 Directions plus LDOs	RBC	

ISSUE	ACTION	SUGGESTED RESPONSIBLE AGENTS	SUGGESTED TIMESCALE
Hard surfacing (e.g. concreting) of front gardens	Development Control: Article 4 Directions plus LDOs and improved detection and enforcement	RBC, BSANA, CAAC	Directions promoted and confirmed by January 2021 and ongoing
Uncontrolled development of front bin landings	Development Control: Article 4 Direction and improved detection and enforcement	RBC, BSANA, CAAC	Directions promoted and confirmed by January 2021 and ongoing
Installation of uPVC windows and uPVC primary entrance doors	Development Control: Article 4 Direction plus LDOs and improved detection and enforcement	RBC, BSANA, CAAC	Directions promoted and confirmed by January 2021 and ongoing
Multiple facade satellite dishes, cabling and pipes on street-facing facades	Community Involvement: Improved detection Enforcement: improved enforcement of the existing regulations; Development Control: Article 4 to remove PD rights for façade blighting elements visible from a public highway, including footpaths	RBC, BSANA, CAAC	Directions promoted and confirmed by January 2021 and ongoing
Building a hard standing	Development Control: Article 4 Directions and enforcement	RBC, BSANA, CAAC	Directions promoted and confirmed by January 2021 and ongoing
Creating unconsented access onto a road or public highway	Community Involvement: Improved detection Enforcement: improved enforcement of the existing regulations;	RBC, BSANA, CAAC	Directions promoted and confirmed by January 2021 and ongoing

ISSUE	ACTION	SUGGESTED RESPONSIBLE AGENTS	SUGGESTED TIMESCALE
The erection or alteration of gates, fences or walls	Development Control: Article 4 Directions plus LDOs and improved detection and enforcement	RBC, BSANA, CAAC	Directions promoted and confirmed by January 2021 and ongoing
Maintenance issues with private premises- domestic and retail			
Prolonged and persistent poor maintenance of properties detrimental to local character	Community Involvement: Communication with landlord and tenants; Enforcement: Enforcement; or in the most severe cases, where detrimental to quality of life the issuance of Community Protection Notice (CPNs)	BSANA, CAAC, RBC	Ongoing
Prolonged and persistent poorly maintained facades: painting, rendering in out-of-keeping materials, redundant wires, excessive pipes detrimental to local character	Community Involvement: Communication with owners; Enforcement: Enforcement	BSANA, CAAC, RBC	Ongoing
Prolonged and persistent poorly maintained boundaries, hedges, fences, and gates detrimental to local character	Communication with landlord and tenants; Enforcement; or where quality of life is issuance of Community Protection Notice (CPNs) provided it is detrimental to quality of life and area amenity	BSANA, CAAC, RBC	Ongoing
Prolonged and persistent poor management of rubbish detrimental to local character	enforcement or in the most severe cases, where quality of life is affected the progression to a Community Protection Notice (CPNs)	BSANA, CAAC, RBC	Ongoing
Shop fronts			
Lack of knowledge by shopowners about character of the area and design parameters	Education of shopowners	RBC, CAAC, BSANA	Improvement schemes to commence 2019-2020 and ongoing

ISSUE	ACTION	SUGGESTED RESPONSIBLE AGENTS	SUGGESTED TIMESCALE
Unsympathetic retail signage, hiding string courses, windows, window cills; use of garish colours, plastic lettering, over dominant lighting, internally illuminated signs	Update Council policy SPD for signage, seek and implement funding to work with retailers to improve issues and enforcement	RBC, CAAC, HE	Improvement schemes to commence 2019-2020
Loss of historic shopfronts	Article 4 Direction plus LDOs and improved detection and enforcement; seek and implement funding to work with retailers to improve issues	RBC, CAAC, HE	Directions promoted and confirmed by January 2021
Metal roller security shutters	Article 4 Direction plus LDOs and improved detection and enforcement; seek and implement funding to work with retailers to improve issues	RBC	Directions promoted and confirmed by January 2021
Parking on retail frontages and forecourts	Enforcement	RBC	Ongoing
Excessive freestanding sale boards, advertising flags	Improved detection and enforcement	RBC,BSANA	Ongoing
Prolonged and habitual storage of goods beyond curtilage and on public footway	Improved detection and enforcement	RBC, BSANA	Ongoing
Permanent storage of rubbish on forecourts	Improved detection and enforcement	RBC,BSANA	Ongoing
Public Realm			
Tarmacadam pavements and patched pavements	Seek and implement funding for improved pavements within Conservation Area	RBC	Improvement schemes to commence 2019-2020
Retention of granite kerbs and setted gutters in any scheme for improvement or repair			Ongoing
Unconsented drop kerbs in the Conservation Area	Improved detection and enforcement	RBC	Ongoing
Out of keeping modern lampposts	Seek and implement funding to reinstate lampposts of appropriate character or originals rescued from other parts of town	RBC, funding streams	Improvement schemes to commence 2019-2020
Redundant and excessive street signage	Survey of streets and reduction where possible	RBC	End of 2020

ISSUE	ACTION	SUGGESTED RESPONSIBLE AGENTS	SUGGESTED TIMESCALE
Unsympathetic street litter bins	Seek and implement funding for replacements	RBC, funding streams	Improvement schemes to commence 2019-2020
Redundant, excessive and unsightly overhead wires	Survey of area and reduction where possible	RBC and utility companies	End of 2020
Household bins on public pavements	Improved detection and enforcement	RBC, BSANA	end of 2020
Fly tipping of bulky items	Improved detection and enforcement	RBC, BSANA	End of 2020
Blight removal			
High numbers of household waste bins in front gardens	Create a scheme to reduce blighting of bins	RBC	End of 2020
Non-compliant estate agent signage; unduly prolonged time period for presence of signage; projection beyond boundary on to public highway	Adherence to and enforcement of RBC's policy on estate agent signage, improved detection and enforcement	RBC, BSANA	Ongoing
Crime and ASB			
Graffiti on public and private realm walls and units	Improved detection and removal	RBC, BSANA	Ongoing
Open drug dealing and use of drugs	Improved detection and policing action/enforcement	TVP, RBC, BSANA, Oxford Road and Minster Safer Neighbourhood Forums (SNF)	Ongoing
Antisocial behaviour and dog fouling	Improved detection and enforcement	RBC, BSANA	Ongoing

Appendices

Appendix 1: Archaeology and Historical Development of the Area

Before the 12th century

There is limited evidence within today's Conservation Area of pre-12th century activity in the form of a small number of Prehistoric and Roman finds and a single feature. These discoveries are recorded on the local Historic Environment Record. (http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/advanced_search.aspx)

Chance finds are simply referenced to Castle Hill as the exact location is unknown. Hunting and gathering tools consist of a flint arrowhead and a bronze arrowhead, spearheads and an axehead and may represent casual loss rather than occupation. A Bronze Age pit containing worked flint was discovered at 1-3 Castle Crescent during an archaeological evaluation. Finds indicating other forms of subsistence are evidenced by coins and sherds of hand-made pottery.

Medieval and early modern settlement

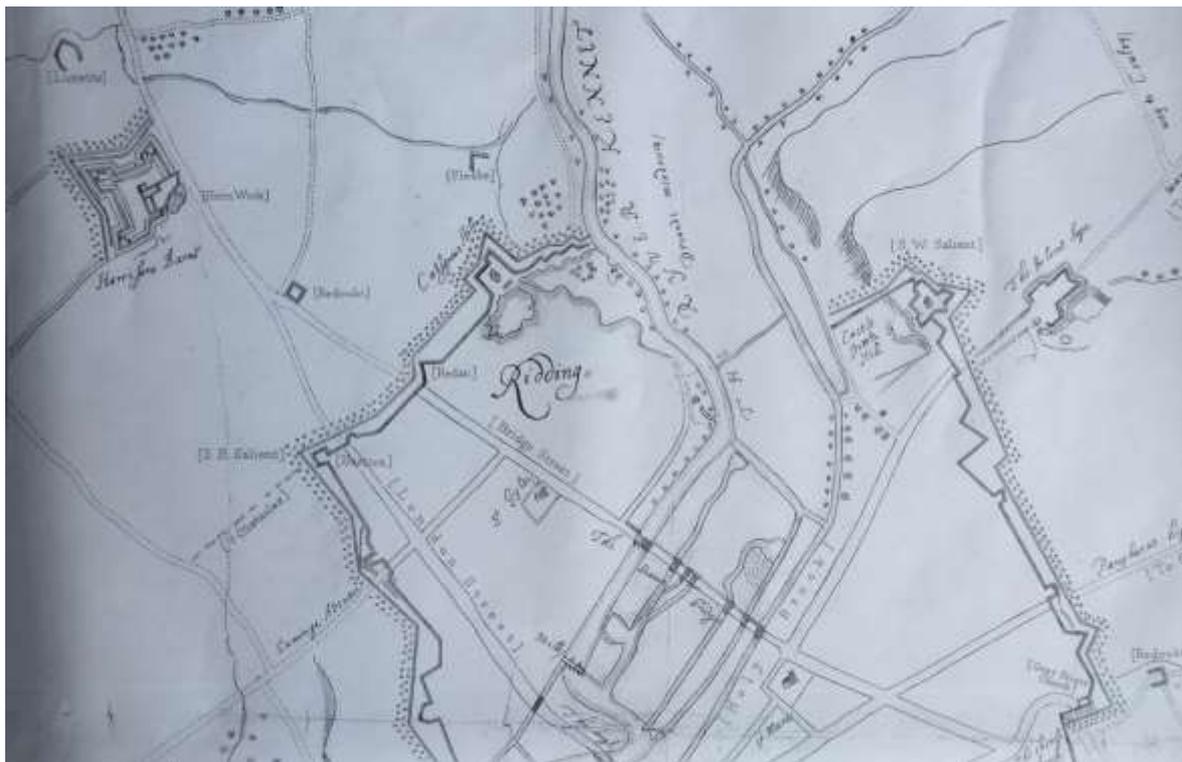
The Conservation Area is defined by the ancient route from London to the west (now Bath Road) and by a route from points south to Oxford, which was called Pangbourn Road (now Oxford Road). The roads intersected near the site of St Mary's Minster.

There is conjecture about whether Castle Hill was the site of a castle possibly built by King Stephen during the civil wars of 1135-53 with Empress Matilda. Although no archaeological evidence has proved that a castle did exist, it may have been a motte and bailey castle constructed of wood and earth.

The eastern part of the Conservation Area between what is now Oxford Road and the southern end of Coley Hill was on the edge of Reading and was occupied in the 1540s, but most of the land was open country.

The area was too far west to be included on John Speed's 1611 map of Reading and the first map to show the land of the Conservation Area is a plan of the defences of Reading from the English Civil War.

Reading changed hands several times during the Civil War but at the end of 1642 was garrisoned by Royalist troops. The governor, Sir Arthur Aston, constructed defences around the town consisting of bastions linked by earth banks. The siege of Reading took place in April 1643 with Parliamentary forces under the Earl of Essex first setting up a position facing the Forlorn'd Hope (at the top of Castle Hill) and Fort Royal (between Castle Hill and Castle Crescent), the major Royalist defensive positions on the west of Reading. Coates map of 1802 marks the area 'Old Fortifications' which indicates that at that time they were still visible.



Part of Burt's etching of a plan of Civil War defences looking South



Part of Coates Map 1802 showing 'Old Fortifications'

Georgian Period 1714-1837

The Bath Road between Reading and Punfield (just west of Theale) was turnpiked by an Act of Parliament in 1715. A toll gate was erected at the top of Castle Hill on the western outskirts of the town, immediately to the east of the drive to the estate of Coley House. A further Act in 1729 extended the jurisdiction of the turnpike trustees westward beyond Punfield as far as Speenhamland at Newbury. The toll gate was moved westward c.1830 about half a mile, to where the town's outskirts had then expanded.

From the mid-18th century onwards, Reading's location meant it became an increasingly important coaching and wagon stop between Bath and London. Inns, such as the

King's Arms Inn (now 154-160 Castle Hill) and public houses such as the Horse and Jockey (now The Castle Tap at 120 Castle Street) rebuilt in 1823 on the site of the 17th century inn, flourished on the road heading west out of town. Baker's and Gilder's London to Newbury coaches advertised a stop here from 1825.

John Rocque's map of 1761 shows plots on the north side of what is now Castle Hill were occupied with southern views across Coley Gorge. Most of those buildings were subsequently demolished or redeveloped.



Extract from Rocque's Map of Reading 1761

The King's Arms, 154-160 Castle Street, is one significant building which remains from that period. 158-160 Castle Street/Castle Hill was constructed in 1734 and an additional wing was added before 1796 to achieve today's footprint. 2 Bath Road, the home of the locally prominent Swallow family, dates from c.1780.

The handsome house at 107 retains the structure which many of these houses may have had with its stable buildings and original back garden footprint still intact.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century a succession of large properties for the wealthier families of Reading were built along the two main roads from the centre. During the century the land between the roads, which had been market gardens and nurseries, was also developed with a range of properties to house wealthy businessmen, artisans and labourers. However, by the end of the nineteenth century Reading's elite had moved away from the area and plots began to be subdivided or large houses demolished to make way for new developments of smaller properties.

On the streets south of the Castlehill House on the eastern side of Coley Hill are further evidence of that early development. Castle Crescent also saw the building of several large homes in the 1830s and 1840s. Yeomanry House, early 19th century, is the finest remaining example of the grand houses surrounded by large gardens built for the wealthy and prominent businessmen of Reading.

York Lodge at 81 Baker Street, now part of The National Spiritualist Church, was built at this time as one of three villas with entrances that faced to the east and away from Baker Street, with drives up to the fronts of the houses and their gardens surrounding them. The other two houses were called Lancaster Lodge and Tudor Lodge, but were later demolished and the site is now occupied by modern flats, Alexander and Nicholas Courts. Bookseller Arthur Lee Humphreys, friend and publisher of Oscar Wilde, lived at York Lodge from c.1899-1946 and his initials and the date 'ALH 1925' can be seen over the gateway to the street. (<https://whitleypump.wordpress.com/2018/07/22/a-reading-bookseller-publisher-and-author-extended-article>)

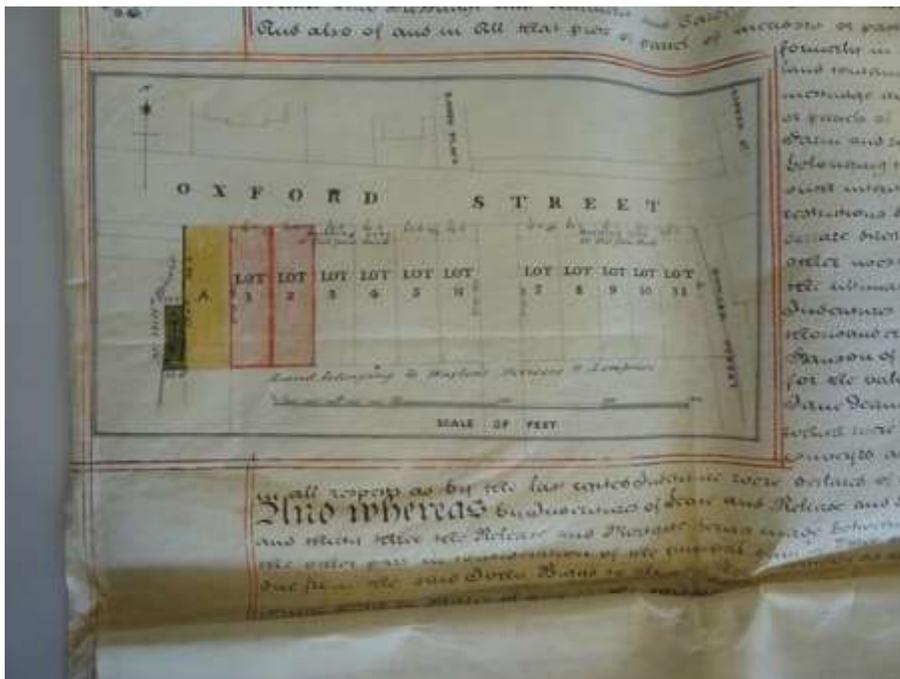


Part of Thomas Coates' map, 1802

A thriving market gardening business developed in the area to the south of the present-day Castle Hill and Tilehurst Road area. Swallows' Nurseries was run by James Swallow with his son William Pratt Swallow. They are known to have supplied plants and shrubs to various local estates, most notably, in the mid 1790's, to Purley Park which at that time was being landscaped by Humphry Repton.

Archaeological investigation around Yeomanry House, known during part of the 19th century as Castlehill House, identified several ditches and discrete post-medieval features. These ditches could have been related to the documented nursery and market gardening on the site prior to the building as shown on Coates' map of 1802.

Mrs. Zinzan's fields are also noted on Coates' map located in the area between today's Waylen Street and Howard Street. They were part of the sizeable local nursery industry in the area supplying vegetables and fruit to the town. The fields were sold off in the 1830s and Waylen Street and Zinzan Street were laid out after that sale. There was another plant nursery named Victoria Nursery just north of the Oxford Road located between the railway and Mason Street and shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1877).



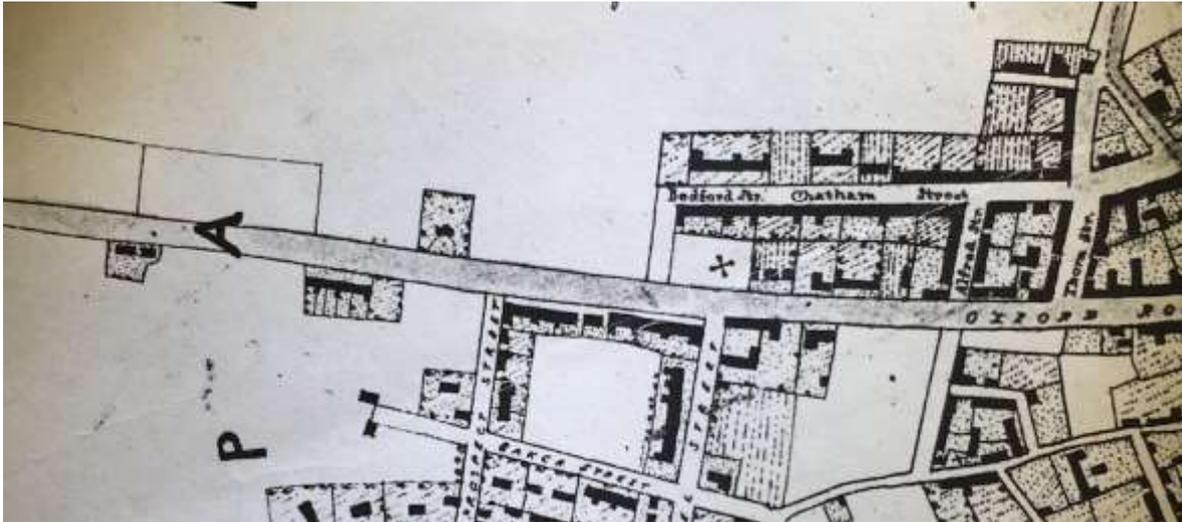
**The deed that created and laid out
Waylen Street and Zinzan Street off the Oxford Road, c.1830s (BRO)**

William Pratt Swallow was also a land surveyor and in the 1820s, possibly sensing the need for housing would be a more profitable venture, he redeveloped large parts of his nurseries for private housing. This marked the beginning of rapid change. Mr Swallow 'founded' Prospect Street and Russell Street, the first two early connector routes from the Oxford Road in the north to the Bath Road and Pigs Green Lane (later Tilehurst Road) routes to the south. Russell Street was laid out along the eastern boundary of former nursery garden plots. These two streets were integral in setting out the grid system for the development of the rest of the streets in the area throughout the 19th century.

Baker Street was continued west of Russell Street during this time directly to the west of Back Lane (later an extension of Baker Street) along other east-west boundaries of Swallow's former fields. The bend in the road created by this development can still be seen in Baker Street today just to the west of its junction with Waylen Street. Some of the earliest development was the listed Georgian terraced housing on the south side of Baker Street (61-79) c.1820s.

Along Oxford Road there was a similar pattern of development, spreading from the town centre to Argyle Street in the west. Georgian houses and terraces line the route and several long terraces dating to the early 19th century are listed. Many of the 2-storey properties, with ground floor shops and residential accommodation above, along the Oxford Road between Alfred Street in the east and Russell Street were also built by 1833. However, with the exception of Prospect Terrace between the present-day Lorne Street and Argyle Street, building along the Oxford Road ended near Prospect Street for the early part of the century. When the railway was built in 1847, building continued for the rest of the century to the west towards and then beyond the railway bridge. By the early 1850s 2-storeyshops mixed with earlier residential terraces had largely filled the Oxford Road frontage between Howard Street and Prospect Street.

Speculative development began in Prospect Street in the 1820s with housing built along the east side. The terrace of artisan houses at 1-9 Prospect Street are rare exemplars of housing for the working man at the time.



Oxford Road, Dormer Map 1833 showing residential terraces and street front shops already in existence to Prospect Street and Prospect Terrace beyond to the west



Oxford Road, Sanitation Map 1853 showing development west to Prospect Street with Prospect Terrace still separate to the west (RESHOOT)

Among the historic churches and places of worship in the area Holy Trinity parish church stands on Oxford Road at the intersection with Russell Street. In 1826 the Reverend George Hulme purchased the site to build a proprietary chapel over the gravel pits in that location in order to construct catacombs. He counted on the high fees which Reading's wealthiest citizens would pay to use the church's burial vaults. Proprietary chapels were not compelled to follow the rules of the traditional orientation of altars facing east. Thus, there is a striking view down Russell Street to its front entrance. The catacombs were sealed off in 1858, due largely to the fact that they kept filling with water but were later used during the Second World War as an air raid shelter.



Holy Trinity Parish Church, Oxford Road, late 19th century. Hulme's Villas sit to its east on the right

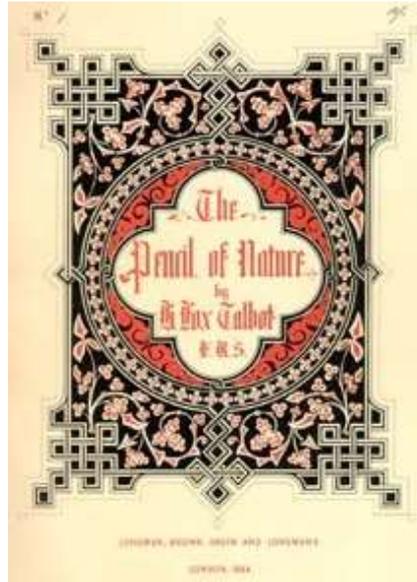
Victorian Development

The railway reached Reading in 1840 and the line through Reading West station was opened in 1847 but the station itself did not open until 1906. The railway and the bridge were placed at a distance from the edge of town which was near Prospect Street. The railway bridge divides the eastern end of the Oxford Road where the properties are a mix of Georgian and Victorian building from the more commercial, largely late Victorian and Edwardian shops further to the west. The bridge, while not the original brick bridge, is a reminder of the industry that arrived to Reading in the mid 19th century and the success that it brought along with it.

Answering the housing needs that Reading had at the latter part of the 19th century larger estates began to be sold off, for the establishment of housing for Reading's rapidly increasing population. There was a movement westward from the town for the development of much needed housing for the many people now working in local industries.

As the population increased, further places of worship were built for the community and those in the Conservation Area mainly date from this period. A number of Nonconformist churches were built among them the Providence Chapel on Oxford Road built c.1859. Carey Baptist Chapel was built in 1869 and named after George Carey, the founder of the Baptist Missionary Society. Towards the end of the century, Bridge Hall was built near the railway bridge for Reading's Open Brethren group. The listed Reading Synagogue (1900), in Goldsmid Road is of Moorish design and is the only purpose-built synagogue in Berkshire.

The Victorian pioneer of early photography, Henry Fox Talbot had a studio, 'The Reading Establishment', at 55 Baker Street (then 8, Russell Terrace) from 1844-47. It was from this studio that the mass production of his invention, the calotype, or 'talbotype' print, was used to produce '*The Pencil of Nature*', the very first mass-produced book which contained photographs. It is due to the presence of the studio in the town that Reading has some of the earliest photographs of the built environment in existence.



The Pencil of Nature, the first mass- produced book containing photographs, published during Fox Talbot's time in Reading



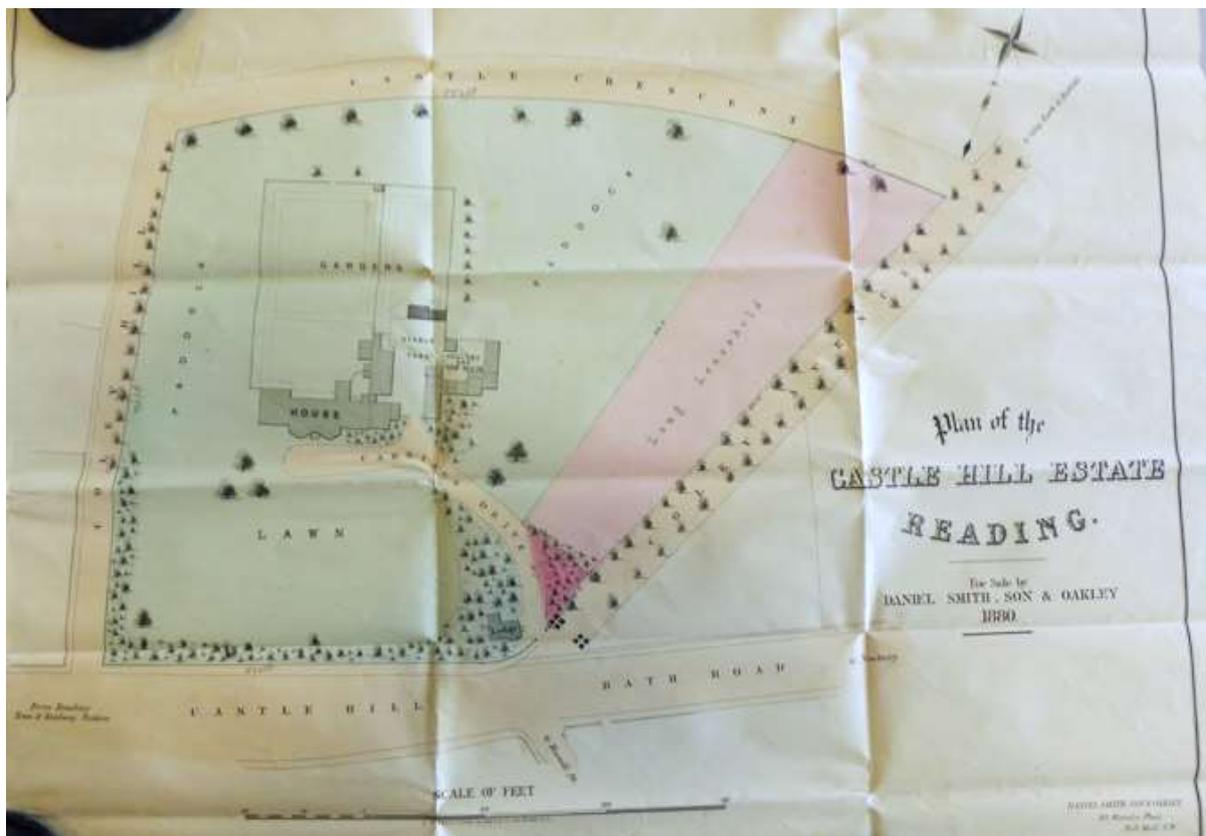
Fox Talbot and his workers at the rear of his studio at 55 Baker Street. To the far right are the houses of 33- 35 Baker Street. (Met public domain, downloaded)

The Jesse family's contribution to the development of Victorian housing in Reading was considerable. Three generations of the Jesse family lived at 154-160 Castle Hill and while they developed sites throughout Reading, they figured most notably in the development of the Conservation Area. All three generations included developers, each generation passing the business down from an uncle to a nephew.

The family built Jesse Terrace in groups of approximately four at a time, with only the earliest group (1-13) being in place prior to 1853. The Terrace was largely completed by the mid 1870s and there are subtle differences in each of the groups that are notable to this day. The large single family homes have a trademark concave metal-roofed veranda, a look repeated on Heritage Court and at 162-164 Castle Hill, properties along Castle Hill which the Jesse family also developed.

In 1880 they purchased what was then known as Castlehill House (now Yeomanry House) and its surroundings, an approximately six acre site, with hopes of turning the entire area into a succession of streets with housing and a grand square of prestigious properties. This was never built as fashions were changing with the coming of the railways and the decline of the Bath

Road. (A drawing of this scheme is in the collection of Jesse family papers at the BRO.) The house then became Ascham House Preparatory School for Gentlemen at the end of the 19th century.



The Yeomanry House site map for its sale in 1880

Twentieth and Twenty-first century development

By the beginning of the 20th century most of the development of housing in the Conservation Area had been completed. However, some housing continued to be built, and Rednirt Villas, in Baker Street, dated 1904 on a central plaque, is an example of the turn of the century small villa, continuing the established style of polychrome brick with terracotta detailing. (The name is amusingly the owners' name Trinder spelt backwards.)

In 1907 Castlehill House became the home of the Berkshire Yeomanry and was consequently renamed Yeomanry House. The Pavilion, once a well-attended cinema which opened in 1929 is now home to the Lifespring Church who have restored much of the original cinema's interior detailing. The Carey Centre and the Salvation Army citadel are on the site of an older terrace of houses facing east into an area called Pine Court, poor quality housing for local factory workers at the nearby Coach Manufactory.

Some of the terraced houses near Jesse Terrace did not have bathrooms, as they did not form part of the original design. Many of the houses were served by communal baths. The nearby slipper baths were located to the rear of Jesse Terrace, behind Castle Street and were constructed in the 1940s or 1950s and demolished c.2003.

The latter half of the 20th century has seen some buildings constructed which are not in keeping with the rest of the Conservation Area while others fit well with their surroundings and are modern assets to the area.

Notably, Castle Gate at 114 Castle Street fits well within its setting in terms of material design and massing. The modern Berkshire Record Office (2000) was built on part of the garden of Yeomanry House using modern materials and a design that strikes the right balance on the

site. The new build at 179 Oxford Road combined elements of the two older buildings on the site and in turn, subtly enhanced the immediate street scene. Regrettably, though, there are a few buildings along the north side of Oxford Road and the occasional modern build on streets south of Castle Hill and scattered throughout the area that have impacted negatively on their settings. Structures that are out of keeping with the Conservation Area are listed in the [Appendix section XX](#) as Opportunities for Enhancement.

Later twentieth century and current developments have responded to Reading's housing demand with the conversion of many of the larger family homes that had been built in the area to Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

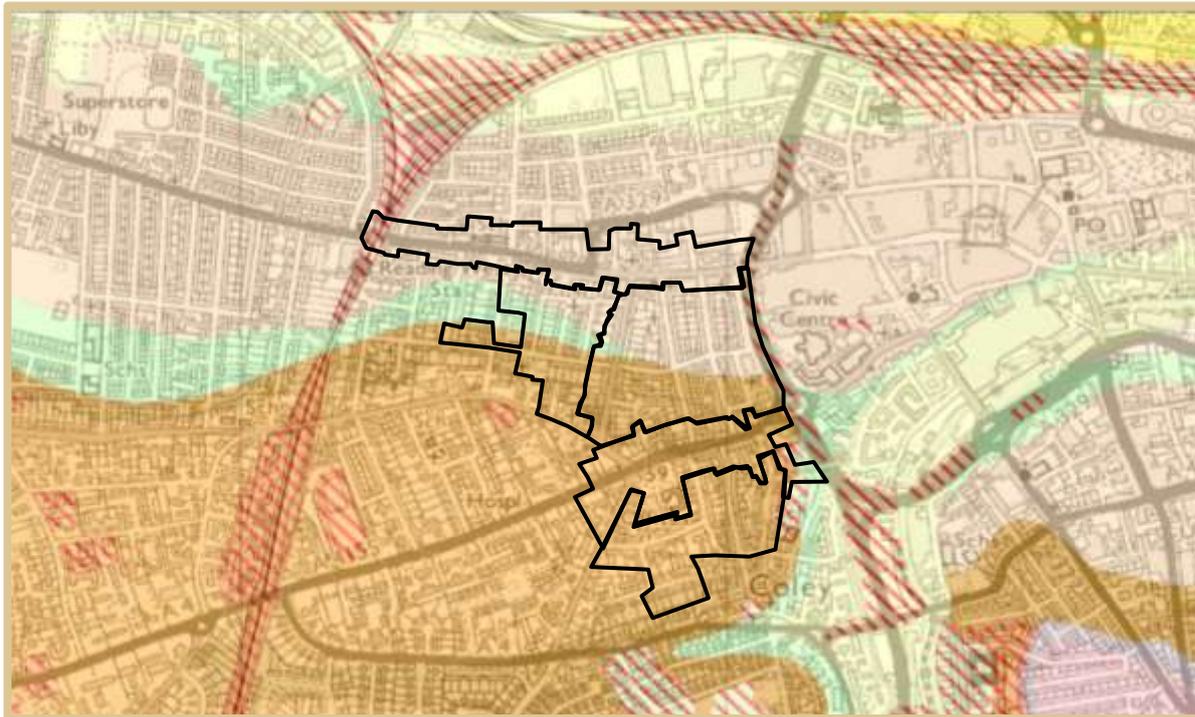
The IDR which was constructed through the eastern end of the Conservation Area in the late 1960s had a significant impact on the character of the area, severing the neighbourhood's direct access from the town centre. The east side of Howard Street was demolished and it also divided Castle Street and Castle Hill in two at the roundabout, thus losing the context of the long road to Bath and the west that went through the town centre at St. Mary's Butts. Significant buildings on Castle Street were lost as well as some substantially older properties to the east of Howard Street and Body Road.

In 1974 the Conservation Area was created, in recognition that the residential neighbourhood to the west of the IDR held a varied and special collection of Reading's range of housing from the 18th to the 20th century.



Finches Buildings- demolished for the IDR. The side of 3 Baker Street at the far right

Appendix 2: Geology and topography



The area sits atop a high mound of clay, silt and sand covering most of the southern portion of the conservation area. Castle Hill sits along the high ridge of that clay. As the land falls away from this ridge towards the north and to the south east, the clay ridge gives way to underlying chalk. The northern most part of the conservation area is made up of sand and gravel deposits which continue northwards to the alluvial deposits of the River Thames beyond. As the higher ground slopes down towards the River Kennet and the Holybrook in the southeastern portion

of the conservation area south of Castle Street, the alluvial silt deposits of the river bed are present.

It was the alluvium silt, sand and clay that was the basis for the famous brick manufacturing in Reading, exemplified widely throughout Reading in the famous red brick and polychrome brickwork on buildings of the 18th to early 20c.

The gravel and alluvium make-up of the area led to the development of a local gravel pit site that figures interestingly in the area to this day. The Holy Trinity parish church (circa 1830) at the bottom of Russell Street on the Oxford Road was built on top of a gravel pit that had been used for the making of the Oxford Road. The site was chosen so that catacombs were easy to create underneath the church.

Appendix 3: Boundary Extension explanation

This appendix contains two evaluations for the justification of the proposed boundary changes. The first, being the notes from residents and the community are more easily understood by the layman in understanding the justifications for the extensions. The second is a more technical explanation designed to align specifically with instruction for the assessment of heritage assets as set out by Historic England. Together, these documents form the current basis of justification for the boundary extensions as proposed.

3.1 Boundary justification notes from BSANA and the CAAC

The Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association (BSANA) and the Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) worked together to compile the following conclusions.

The re-inclusion of all addresses on Body Road, Anstey Road & 3-11 Baker Street.

These properties were removed at the last appraisal in 2004 citing the following reason:

“These are late 19th century houses, mostly in multiple occupation (flats) which have been adversely affected by the loss of their original windows and front doors. Other detrimental features include the addition of satellite dishes, the loss of front boundaries and the modern buildings facing the Inner Relief Road.”

It is noted that many of the same situations on the properties remain today that were cited in the removal of this area in 2004.

However, in the initial consultation on the reappraisal of the area using the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit, it was noted that “the bays and 3 story nature of the properties in the area do have merit.” It was at that time, if persons felt that the area should be re-included and initial opinion ranged from “yes” to “possibly so,” to “probably not,” noting that its condition was no different from other streets that were in the Conservation Area currently. (That factor is also largely why the Conservation Area has been listed as a Conservation Area at Risk recently.)

Future consultation with locals, noted that many in the area also greatly appreciate the airy openness afforded the area with the Carey Centre’s central (but private) green garden space and would like to ensure the protection of that perspective in addition to the merit of the housing along the street. The open, airy space is a desirable and rare open space within the Conservation Area, and something to be noted as a positive for the wider Conservation Area in conjunction with the “pedestrian avenue” with trees along Body Road that protects the area from the pollution and noise generated by the IDR below it.

In shaping this thought, numerous on- site visits have been had since 2016 to discuss the area and its “value” to the Conservation Area with Historic England, Civic Society and BSANA leaders and CAAC professional members. Ultimately, this later opinion has unanimously determined, that the re-inclusion of the area was justified for reasons detailed below:

Following the initial mixed review, the understanding of the “true value” and the USP (unique selling point) of the Conservation Area was progressed and ultimately solidified, thus providing the key reason why this area should be re- included back into the Conservation Area.

- 1.) During the process of evaluation, the Conservation Area since 2016, most importantly, the inclusion of the area was seen to be justified as ***the area forms an integral component of the Conservation Area’s complete housing history from the 18c to the 20c. It lends an important aspect to Conservation Area as a very thorough microcosm of Reading’s residential housing history. This factor is the USP of the Conservation Area as outlined in this document.***

This area’s specific contribution to this historical value is as such:
By the 1890s Reading’s population had nearly trebled from the 1860s and building had to respond quickly to this with houses for working families which the houses in this area

provided by converting open land within the town. The residential properties of Body Road and Anstey Road and 3-11 Baker Street were built roughly during the 1890s, on a piece of land once owned by the Carey Particular Baptist. They were always modest homes, however the design of the bay fronted windows and polychrome detailing of the north-south length of Anstey Road and of 3-11 Baker Street are evidence of Reading's attempt to create attractive, affordable housing albeit on very modestly sized plots, as these are. The area provides an interesting contrast as a more modest version in terms of plot footprints than similar terraced housing that was developed on Clifton and Franklin Streets during the same period.

The houses of Body Road (both sides), 1-3 Anstey Road and the southern (east- west length) of Anstey Road (5- 13) are larger than the long terrace at 2-50 Anstey Road and the houses at 3-11 Baker Street. These larger houses all have a similar built form with a detailed wooden bargeboard centre dormer, all of which are retained to this day (recently concealed at 5 Anstey). The ability to appreciate this design difference is easily noted standing in the open area at the Body Road and Anstey Road junction. Their place in the wider history of the area's residential development is thus evidenced. Additionally, these streets figure substantially in the overall scale, layout and built form of the entirety of the neighbourhood and Conservation Area to the west, and reinforce visually, the scale of this residential area to the immediate west of the IDR.

- 2.) ***The removal of this area from the Conservation Area in 2004 confused and weakened the boundary line and eastern border of the Conservation Area***, to the extent that the visitor to the area is unclear exactly where the Conservation Area begins and ends. A natural boundary line is easily understood geographically, with the IDR corridor and to best understand the Conservation Area and its parameters, this needs to be re-established.
- 3.) ***The area could and should act neatly and naturally as the eastern edge of the Conservation Area, reinforcing a proper and easily understandable border of the Conservation Area along the IDR corridor.***
 - a.) The Carey Centre and the Salvation Army were originally a re-gifting of land to two locally-based churches to re- establish on after the loss of land from the development of the IDR. Although not residential and clearly listed as "Opportunities for Enhancement" should redevelopment options present themselves in the future, ***these two sites still affirm the height parameter of the Conservation Area as a "residential neighbourhood scale" and reinforce the very eastern most edge of the Conservation Area to the IDR as a complete area.*** This parameter of height scale is an essential element to be retained for the western side of the IDR in defining its strikingly different scale to future expected higher development to the east within the old Civic Centre site.

In the future, when/if the more modern Salvation Army and the Carey Centre were to be redeveloped, it is hoped that greater planning care be taken in assuring their suitability in terms of design, massing and materials to the overall make-up of the Conservation Area and its immediate neighbourhood. ***Brought back in to the Conservation Area, opportunities to landscape and better address this boundary edge in a more softened sense could be prioritised.***

b.) ***In particular the current and sustained removal of 3-11 Baker Street can result in "less than favourable impacts" to important views from and along Baker Street to and from the east (views 6A and 6B) Its removal also jeopardizes the amenity of properties along Baker Street itself*** and has created an unclear boundary and entry into the Conservation Area along that street. Number 11 which has been the subject of an unfortunate ad-hoc renovation has been listed as an "Opportunity for Enhancement."

- 4.) ***The inability to keep the area under some measure of control is having and would continue to have an adverse impact on the remainder of the Conservation Area.***
Geographically, so much “part of the neighbourhood,” if the area were not to be re-included, egregious treatments would be not only be seen to be the “norm” but likely to “spread throughout the area” as continued degradation of the area, will only conversely affect the wider Conservation Area. The regrettable ad- hoc “improvement” of a red tiled roof at 10 Body Road could likely have been halted if it had been within the Conservation Area, and this sort of egregious renovation needs to be able to be controlled.
- 5.) ***The guidance of the 2004 appraisal noted that a good working relationship with community was needed in the area overall which the Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association (BSANA), created in 2012, has greatly helped to provide to the area. This area lies within the remit of that organisation and as a result of this association, reasonable improvements in focusing on local issues, individual properties and the public realm have been directly addressed by the organisation including the removal of appx 70 bins along the pavement in Anstey Road. In the long term, this association works to have a positive effect on its entire neighbourhood remit and sees itself intrinsically engaged in the removal of the Conservation Area from the At-Risk listing by encouraging improvements in the area with residents and landowners in the future. This engagement should have sufficient positive effect of continuing to buoy the area along with this rest of the neighbourhood and the Conservation Area.***

It is hoped that with the re- inclusion of this area, that there will be a flow of improvements between these streets and those of the core centre of the Conservation Area that BSANA can easily facilitate. It would be desirable to see degradation reversed to the properties and the ability to focus on the restoration of character in the wider area.

- 6.) ***Ultimately, recent discussions with Historic England have highlighted the desire to re- knit and unify the eastern side of Castle Street with the western side of Castle Hill across the IDR. Along the IDR corridor, this area would visually impact that aspiration to a significant degree.*** If this “rejoining” of these roads is to be pursued, without this area being a part of the Conservation Area, funding could be constrained to be directed to enhance and mitigate aesthetic concerns of this natural eastern boundary line to the residential area. ***As a result, the area would continue to be a “wild card” that would neither benefit the Conservation Area, nor the Minster Quarter development opposite, nor any future aspirations at the IDR roundabout in that area.***

The inclusion of 1-15 Castle Street (Castle Gate flats); the green space at the northwest corner of the Castle Street/IDR roundabout; 3 to 7 Coley Place (odds); the open park area to the south of those houses along Coley Place:

The necessity to include Castle Gate flats and the green space on the south western side of the Castle Street roundabout again **helps to reduce confusion of the Conservation Areas boundary line by its re-inclusion.** The area was eliminated in the 2004 appraisal along with Anstey Road and Body Road exclusion.

- 1.) **The area geographically denotes an understood and natural beginning of the Conservation Area, directly off of the IDR roundabout, repairs a jagged eastern boundary line for the Conservation Area and reduces the risk of that portion of the area immediately to the west of the IDR to future development that might be inappropriate to the Conservation Area in the future.**
- 2.) **Despite the lack of historical interest of the green space at the roundabout and the Castle Gate building, they affect the critical and very important kinetic viewpoints into and out of the Conservation Area (views 6A and 6B).** They also would figure in strongly in any re-

knitting of the Castle Street/Castle Hill corridor over the IDR roundabout as suggested recently by Historic England. If the locations were to continue to be open to any manner of future development, there would be less opportunity to ensure this important entryway into the Conservation Area in terms of ensuring appropriate scale, massing or materials. Whilst the Castle Gate flats regrettably replaced an earlier listed building, their development is a reasonably good example of modern development that sits well within the conservation area setting in terms of materials and massing. As such, there is not likely to be a better option for development at that location that is likely to emerge, and it does not detract from the overall character of the area by its inclusion.

3.) Furthermore, the inclusion of 3-7 Coley Place and open space to the south help to define this entrance into the Conservation Area as they are the focal interest of view 17, the first “view within the Conservation Area” that one notes upon entrance to the Conservation Area from the Castle Street roundabout.

- a.) **Important view:** The addresses of 3-7 Coley Place and the patch of green space to the south of those buildings also affect the entrance into the Conservation Area as they are directly visible to the south upon entering the Conservation Area. They form part of a locally well-loved, evocative and attractive view up to the houses, from Castle Hill below, with their striking silhouetted terraced end (view 17).
- b.) **Historical development:** Part of an early secondary residential street, they provide a quiet and isolated contextual contrast from the busy, wide route of Castle Street as it winds its way up the hill to the west below. These last three houses were once part of a much longer terrace of appx 10 houses that extended to the south along the escarpment that were in place before the 1870s. Whilst they are not currently well-tended to, *they do provide the solitary example of remaining terraced mansard roofs with dormers in the Area.* Additionally, the houses have an original basement floor open to the back to the east as they hug the escarpment. By their inclusion within the Conservation Area, as the last vestiges of this residential development along the escarpment, and off Castle Street, they provide by juxtaposition, the physical evidence of the functional relationship of the difference in this housing style from the large, wealthy villas along Castle Street and Castle Hill. Thus, they further reinforce the story of residential styles of the Conservation Area.
- c.) **The continued exclusion of the modern building on the southwest corner of the roundabout:** The consideration of inclusion of the southwestern corner of the roundabout was considered but dismissed at this time due to the factors that there is little if anything that this site adds to the Conservation Area except for open space as the building has no merit to the Conservation Area at all. It would indeed be regrettable and inadvisable if that site were to be subject to even greater inappropriateness of development in terms of height, scale or materials, that were out-of-keeping with the Conservation Area, but this is up for further discussion as to whether in the establishment of a natural boundary line for the Conservation Area, that this site should also be included. It is very likely that a TPO of the trees on the site might provide the best protection to the entrance at this location.

4.) The proposed extension also includes the land to the south of these houses and includes the walkway off of the IDR pedestrian bridge overpass; an area not likely to be easily used for building at the precipice edge of the escarpment. If properly landscaped, the open space could show clearly the topographical restrictions of the chalk and clay escarpment that Castle Street followed along to its south and could provide valued green space with historic views off to the east. In a Conservation Area and town centre that lacks green space, this is an ideal opportunity. Funding could hopefully be sought to appropriately address this.

The inclusion of 78 Oxford Road to 190 Oxford Road (evens) on the north side from Alfred Street to the railway bridge and the south side of Oxford Road from Prospect Street to the railway bridge.

The proposal to include the remaining south side of the Oxford Road to the Reading West railway bridge in the west and the entirety of the northern side of the road between the IDR and the bridge, comprises the single largest change to the boundary of the Conservation Area within this appraisal. **The inclusion of this area is multi- fold, but the chief reason for such action is to acknowledge the historical importance of the road as one of the two major routes to the west out of the town centre along with the Bath Road;** the two roads forming the structure along which the infill residential streets of the Conservation Area were developed between.

This boundary change is key in qualifying what is essentially a significant paradigm shift in terms of understanding the Conservation Area itself and how the Conservation Area is dramatically linked and affected by the condition and appearance of the Oxford Road itself. It also helps to give a fuller understanding of the bigger picture of the development of this important residential area west of the town centre through time.

1.) **The high number of historic buildings along this half a mile stretch of the Oxford Road include 40 listed properties*, an impressive number that reinforces the value of the road to Reading's history and the history of the area.**

a.) **Historical justification:** When taken in the entire context from the IDR Bridge in the east to the railway bridge in the west, the Oxford Road *exhibits a long, constantly changing mix of Georgian and Victorian retail and residential terraces with no discernible boundary until the railway bridge.* The Dormer Map of 1833 confirms the Georgian terraced housing was in place by that time along with buildings along the road near both Alfred Street and Russell Street. The 1853 Sanitation Map shows that the Oxford Road was almost entirely built up west out of town to Prospect Street and that there was no permanent build further west towards the railway bridge except for Prospect Terrace. The fly-over bridge, when built in 1847, therefore is noted to have been purposely laid out at a distance from substantial settlement. Growth continued towards the bridge and eventually on the other side to the west, in the latter decade of the 19c and after the turn of the century. As such, the railway bridge neatly and naturally marks an end to the Conservation Area's boundary with the clear architectural demarcation of the "regular variety" of the mix of Georgian and Victorian built structures. *It is observed to be one single character area with this mix of Georgian and Victorian residential terraces and shops, religious buildings and its school that harmonize with a vibrant and historic character. It is this mix and character that defines the scale and grain of the streetscape, justifying and confirming its existence as a very influential character area within the Conservation Area.*

*** listed individually or as part of a group.**

b.) **Furthermore, there are many other highlights** and the proposed boundary extension of the Oxford Road character area includes the following positive aspects:

- The polychrome terraced shops at 152 to 180 are a noteworthy grouping along the Oxford Road. They form part of an impressive poly-chromed section of the road with the coordinating residential terraces opposite at 249-261.
- The two mirror-image residential terraces at 249-253 and 255-261 sitting at each side of the entrance to Argyle Street.
- Prospect Terrace at 237-247 and 2 Lorne Street is a fine listed Georgian terrace in fair to poor condition.
- Bridge Hall, at the corner of Gower Street is a vestige of the area's proud non-conformist Church past. It is currently used but in poor condition and in need of investment.

- MTC Motorcycles, at 269-271, whilst providing an “Opportunity for Enhancement” at its street front, hides a rare “secret” behind, as it sits in the former “front garden” of Oxford Villa, the roof of which can be seen from Gower Street opposite.
 - The Oxford Road Community School.
 - Parish Church of the Holy Trinity.
 - Listed buildings at 104, 118, 120-122, 124 along the north side.
 - The hidden Gothik villa at 118 is an undiscovered “gem.”
- c.) **Extended inclusion is substantiated by public consultation:** In an initial appraisal of the Oxford Road, utilising the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit with residents, the possible inclusion of the Oxford Road beyond Prospect Street to the railway bridge was given serious review. **At that review, the “vibrant environment” of that portion of the road was positively noted and the group was “of the considered unanimous view that this part of the Oxford Road should be included within the conservation area.”** **Noted highlights of the road west of Prospect Street were the Oxford Road Community School that is “the jewel in the crown,” “the vibrant polychrome brickwork above many of the shops along the route” and “the historic Georgian Prospect Terrace.”** The historical thread that runs along the road with early Georgian buildings and later Victorian buildings tell the story of the development of this portion of Reading’s residential expansion west and how the road as a thoroughfare related to the neighbourhoods off of it. The legibility of this development is best observed in a story that is told along both sides of the road and by an extension that includes the area up to the historical demarcation of the railway bridge.
- 2.) Unless there are justifiable reasons not to, Historic England advises that **a conservation area boundary line should not run down the middle of a road as the setting and the views in and out of the Conservation Area are too tightly and critically linked and the Conservation Area may suffer as a result of this lack of control.** This advice is particularly worth noting in the current situation along the Oxford Road where poor development on one side of the road has frequently had a negative effect on the other, and the appearance of the Oxford Road setting within the Conservation Area as a whole has suffered. **As the Oxford Road is subject to intense speculation, rapid change and frequent ad hoc renovations, additional controls such as can be exerted within the context of a conservation area need to be in place to attempt to restore where character has been lost as a result. As such, a boundary modification to include the side of the road north of the existing boundary is considered to be advisable and necessary.**
- 3.) **This does acknowledge that significant issues along the road are present in sections.**
- a.) So rapid and constant is change along the road, that the **listed and non- listed buildings within the Conservation Area along the route have suffered from the lack of resources within the Council to enforce frequently-occurring infractions** of replacement uPVC doors and windows and details such as Georgian fanlights, chimney stacks and egregious signage over retail shops.
- b.) **Additionally, modern buildings along the northern edge have been built over the last decades,** sometimes directly within the settings of listed buildings (next to or directly opposite of) thus showing that this juxtaposition has had little to no effect on the likely not been accorded proper value in past planning decisions.
- c.) **Addressing 181-185A Oxford Road specifically:** The stand of unlisted properties along the Oxford Road from 181- 185A have changed little since the appraisal in 2004, but in comparison with other sections, they are not significantly “worse”. However, the section shows signs of lifting with the recent redevelopment of no. 179 right next door. The new residential building at 179 is a redesign of two earlier buildings that, in taking details of both, created a “positive pastiche” improving and elevating the immediate street scene with a subtle, yet attractive improvement. As such, it has contributed

positively to the setting of its immediate neighbours and shows the promise of regeneration in this area along the road that can lead to improvement of its neighbours.

4.) **Future funding possibilities and what that could ostensibly look to address:**

- a.) **regarding the proximity to the new development of Minster Quarter:** The town centre to the east of the Oxford Road will be seeing the increased infusion of much new housing in the upcoming years **and the historical merit of the Oxford Road and its vibrant cultural mix can be better revealed and enhanced by seriously exploring funding to be invested in the area for improvements. With the nearby re-building of the Hosier Street //Minster Quarter area, this section should be prioritised for improvements to restore and enhance its character.** The Oxford Road area needs to “rise” to meet these new improvements within the Minster Quarter area and would do no service to the surrounding modern developments to continue on in its current state. The added advantage of the potential to attract funding for this extended area of the Oxford Road is the that the road's varied historical elements can be enhanced, the streetscape can be improved and elevated and the prosperity of the vibrant multi-cultural local retail trade can be in better position to meet future retail challenges as a result. Instead of a detractor to the new area of development, this could be a clear benefit.
- b.) **addressing the out- of-keeping, modern intrusions along Oxford Road:** Funding could address the mitigation of damage that may take decades to otherwise see improvements. In terms of the built environment, these are buildings that are labelled in the appraisal as “opportunities for enhancement.” These buildings are frequently modern and out- of-keeping with the road and are seen as long- term detracting elements affecting the character of the Conservation Area. Of these sites, half of them are on the north side of the current Conservation Area boundary line with most right next-door-to or opposite the road from listed buildings. The remaining half lie past the Prospect Road junction to the west and many, but not all of these sites lie along the northern corridor. Largely built since the 1960s, these sites were given approvals without the understanding we have today of the importance of settings to heritage assets (listed buildings and Conservation Areas). Such sites need to be carefully addressed when they come up for re-development in terms of creating places that enhance and do not detract from the Conservation Area setting. **In the interim, improving the landscaping and frontages of these sites is something that funding streams could address to mitigate their impact on the area's character. To not include these sites within the Conservation Area, allows for a continuing separation of the sites' relationships and obligations to the Conservation Area and to the surrounding listed buildings as a result.**

These sites are identified as:

- o Eaton Court, 104-112 Oxford Road * directly opposite current Conservation Area, next door to a listed building
- o Empty Lot at 114 Oxford Road * directly opposite current Conservation Area, next door to the Listed Parish Church
- o Odd Fellows Hall, 118 Oxford Road * directly opposite current Conservation Area, directly opposite and next to two listed buildings
- o Richer Sounds, 118A Oxford Road * directly opposite current Conservation Area, directly opposite listed buildings
- o The Royal PH, 2 Bedford Road (corner of Oxford Road) * directly opposite current Conservation Area, directly opposite listed buildings to the north and to the west
- o 130 Oxford Road, out-of-keeping but well landscaped *, next door to a listed building

- Allison Court, 136 Oxford Road *, next to the listed School and opposite listed buildings
 - BP Petrol Station, 150 Oxford Road * , next to the listed School and opposite listed buildings
 - Tesco Express, 211-221 Oxford Road,
 - MTC Motorcycles, 269-271 Oxford Road
- c.) **Other issues that could possibly be targeted with funding programmes:** There are issues within the private and public realm that need addressing, but the history and character of a road that is ripe for regeneration and the infusion of funding is evident. Funding to address issues could look to be targeted to improve issues such as:
- Out-of-keeping ground floor retail facades and metal roller security gates.
 - Irregular, illuminated and out- of- keeping signage along the road.
 - Out-of-keeping, modern glass-fronted ground floor retail.
 - The poor state of many of the properties. The eastern end of the road near the IDR Bridge and the “entrance” to the Conservation Area from the town centre is especially challenged and in poor repair. With the nearby re-building of the Hosier Street area, this section should be prioritised for improvements to restore and enhance its character.
 - The poor maintenance of the public realm creates a distracting discordance and detracts from the enjoyment and understanding of the heritage of the road.
 - The loss of original windows and details, whilst not replaceable, can be addressed with the introduction of more appropriate, in-keeping elements that would reaffirm the architectural heritage of the area. Where this has occurred on listed buildings, enforcement and like-for-like replacement should be prioritised.
 - Whilst positively, there is a very limited amount of painting over of brick on the road there are some earlier stuccoed frontages along the route above shop-frontages. As the painting over of brick has its own traditional historical value, especially above shop- fronts (such as at 84), this it is not entirely out-of-keeping. Nonetheless, over- painting of brick along the road is regrettable at two locations: 139-141 (a badly compromised listed building at corner of Russell Street) and at 184 which has concealed some polychrome work at the very end of the terrace on the first floor. 221 has over-painted stone which detracts from the fine architecture and appearance of the building. Funding could possibly be looked at to address these issues.

The inclusion of 1 to 23 Prospect Street (odds) and 2 through 14 (evens) Prospect Street: Prospect Street, along with Russell Street, was one of the first two purpose-built connector roads to the south Castle Street/Bath Road route from the Oxford Road and was “founded” by William Pratt Swallow in the 1820s.

- 1.) **Retaining what was built along Prospect Street from this time period is critical to enable understanding of the area’s layout as a residential neighbourhood.** Its inclusion within the Conservation Area is warranted in the understanding of the building of the grid pattern set out in the residential neighbourhood between Castle Street and Oxford Road. Fortunately, there are some rare surviving examples of this early speculative development off of Oxford Road to the south.
- 2.) **Built prior to 1833, the artisan terrace at 1 to 9 Prospect Street form a unique group of simple two-storey terraced cottages that were built to house artisan labourers and craftsmen.** Along with the slightly later Prospect Mews houses to their immediate north (in place prior to 1853), the functional relationship of these houses sits in clear juxtaposition to

the larger, wealthy Sidney Terrace to their immediate north along Oxford Road. A rare surviving patch of cobblestones remains at the entrance to the alley in front of the Mews. Despite the poor condition of 1-9 (with only 9 retaining a majority of original features and an egregious dormer at 1) it would be advisable to look to listing this terrace as more humble housing stock of this age is a rarity. As it is, the terrace is now marked as "Building of Townscape Merit."

- 3.) **The remaining larger houses on the east at 11-23 Prospect Street were also largely built prior to 1833 although several were clearly added and altered later during the 19c.** Their facades are overall quite simple, but their function was to house larger families than the small artisan cottages of 1-9. The attractive mouldings and detailing of 23 were of noted positively during the initial consultation in 2016 and likely show the desire of residents later in the century to enhance their older property to keep pace with changing styles.
- 4.) **A boundary change is also sought to include the pre-WWI early Edwardian properties from 4-26 along the west side of Prospect Street in order to preserve the historical integrity of both sides of the north end of Prospect Street in as much as reasonable.** There are some fine terra-cotta and poly-chrome detailing along these semi-detached houses that are of merit and they are worthy of retention. The very recent building on the former site of an historical stone-mason's plot at 8-16, is reasonably sensitive in materials, height and pavement footprint to the original properties on the side and does not detract unduly from the remainder of the west side of the Street. Dropped kerbs have eroded front boundary lines but the integral design of these houses remains largely unaltered.

2 thru 28 Mansfield Road (evens) 1 through 29 Mansfield Road (odds); 1,2,3 Coley Park Road

The inclusion of this area south of Castle Crescent is clearly advised from an appraisal of the character area where-in Castle Crescent sits.

- 1.) **The bulk of the housing at the centre of Mansfield Road, a purpose-built cul-de-sac, off Coley Park Road to the left and to the right were built during the same housing development phase as Castle Crescent and shares the definition, scale and "grain" of Castle Crescent as a result.** The villas in large gardens are attractive and generally well-maintained. It is perceived to be reasonable to only include those houses along Mansfield Road that were built within this development c1890-1910.

The houses retain many original features with Victorian tiles and polychrome detailing and are generally well-cared for despite the fact that many have been converted to HMOs. Coley Park Road between the two streets forms an attractive link between the two streets and despite some modern- generally in-keeping housing there are fine tall brick walls (several with capped tops) that are worthy of conserving.

- 2.) **Regrettably the house at 3(?) Mansfield Road at the far north east of the street was also part of this development phase, but the intervening modern bungalows that bear no create an awkwardness for its inclusion. ** (To note this was advised to consider inclusion in both consultation and also by Historic England. This should be discussed.)**

Views: It is additionally important to note the fine perspective and open air feeling that Mansfield Road provides to the area. **High up on the escarpment, a clear view of the steeple of St. Giles Church, over half a mile away can be enjoyed towards the east from all along Mansfield Road.**

3.2 Justification for boundary extensions based on Historic England Advice Note 3

Historic England Advice Note 3- The Setting of Heritage Assets advises an analysis method for defining heritage assets.

The Conservation Area sustains features of character and appearance that flow from its special historic and architectural interest. It is these features that are considered desirable to preserve and enhance due to the importance of their spatial relationships, their rarity, their contribution to local distinctiveness and identity, and their value to the local community. Each of these features aids understanding of their individual and cumulative historic and architectural interest of the Conservation Area.

For these reasons, the following section discusses how each area of the proposed extensions responds to:

- spatial relationships;
- the collective interest of the built environment;
- local distinctiveness and identity;
- rarity; and
- the value of the extended areas to the local community.

OXFORD ROAD CHARACTER AREA AND JUSTIFICATION FOR THREE EXTENSIONS

WESTERN EXTENSION OF OXFORD ROAD CHARACTER AREA

Special historic interest of the Character Area

The railway bridge marked the outer limits of the growth of Reading town westwards. The part of Oxford Road between Prospect Street to the east and the railway bridge is largely documented as an area of fields and open areas at the time the railway bridge was constructed. It then became more of a suburban idyll, with villas in large gardens, that was infilled progressively by large terraces creating a mix of Georgian and Victorian styles. Extending the boundary of the Conservation Area as far as the bridge facilitates an understanding of how this street grew, which is key to understanding the local distinctiveness and identity of this part of Oxford Road.

The historic expansion of the town westward led to a socio-economic character that is still evident today. This commercial extension from the town centre has led to the vibrant multicultural environment so characteristic of the Street today. As a consequence, this part of Oxford Road, similar to the rest of this Character Area, continues to this day to be subject to intense speculation, rapid change and frequent ad hoc renovations.

Special Architectural interest of the Character Area

The extension facilitates an understanding of the spatial relationship of the entire half mile of Oxford Road as an architectural time capsule of this phase of Reading's growth, evidencing a gentle mix of Georgian and Victorian shops and homes unique to Reading. Locating the boundary of the Character Area at the railway bridge illustrates the spatial relationship between the railway bridge and the street, and Reading town centre. The existence of buildings with architectural merit, both listed and Buildings of Townscape Merit, lends weight to understanding this spatial relationship. For example, the use of mirror image terraces, at 249-253 and at the junction with Argyle Street, is a rare example of the use of symmetry and space to create impact within a busy environment.

A collective interest is created by the mix of Georgian and Victorian Buildings of Townscape Merit, which facilitates an understanding of contextual links between the western extension of Oxford Road and the eastern end of Oxford Road. In particular, there are links between the similarities in scale and massing and similarities and differences in the architectural detailing at the south side, 249-253, and the north side of Oxford Road, 170-180 within this western extension. In addition, there is a collective interest proffered by the Buildings of Townscape Merit on the north side of Oxford Road, working west to east: the variation in architectural exuberance in the small scale buildings of 186-190 and Bridge Hall, 184 Oxford Road; and the differences and similarities in scale and massing and similarities and differences in the architectural detailing at 152-180 Oxford Road. Equally there is a collective interest proffered by the Buildings of Townscape Merit on the south side of Oxford Road, including a little series of terraces between Prospect and Lorne Streets. The greater exuberance in the detailing of the Victorian terraces 205-209 and 221-223 contrasts with the simple aesthetic of the Georgian styles at 225-235, which is noteworthy. These provide a fortuitous juxtaposition and architectural context for the listed terrace of 237-247 Oxford Road and the remarkable mirror image terraces, 249-253.

One of the most noteworthy community buildings along this half mile is the collection of buildings known as Oxford Road Primary School. As an educational institute, providing a shared connection, and a strong Victorian aesthetic, this building holds strong communal value and has become a landmark building, in part due to its aesthetic and in part due to its spatial relationship with George Street. This location and the surrounding green lends an openness to the enclosed nature of the Street, which is a rare feature that is valued by the local community. ... value to the local community = consultation feedback and with Historic England, Civic Society and BSANA leaders and CAAC professional members

NORTHERN EXTENSION OF OXFORD ROAD CHARACTER AREA

Special historic interest of the Character Area

The built environment between Alfred Street and Eaton Place evidences the link between the town centre and Oxford Road that was existing prior to 1833. That spatial relationship supports the same link between the south side of Oxford Road between Howard Street and Russell Street- I would opine Streets. The local distinctiveness of this connection is illustrated by the commercial nature of this corridor and the local identity is supported by the significant buildings, such as the Providence Chapel and the Pavillion, a former Cinema, now Lifespring Church on the south side and Holy Trinity Church on the north side of Oxford Road. These churches hold unique historic and community links and are larger buildings in wider plots than is typical of the surrounding terraces. These buildings coarsen the finer grain achieved by the retail terraces but the high quality of the architectural fabric and the community and historical value associated with the churches add to the distinctiveness of the area. This is augmented by the western extension of the Character Area, which includes Bridge Hall. Dotted further to the south within the residential streets are other non- conformist places of worship including the Carey Baptist Church on Carey Street and the Synagogue on Goldsmid Road that collectively, solidly evidence the importance of religion in the area, which was contemporary with the built environment during the latter part of the 19th century.

Another important spatial relationship is in evidence between Holy Trinity Church and Russell Street. The church provides an end view in a panorama looking north along Russell Street, which increases the buildings prominence on the street scene and to the Conservation Area as a whole.

Special Architectural interest of the Character Area

The buildings in this Character Area are a mix of residential and retail terraces, that are listed, Buildings of Townscape Merit or unlisted. All form part of the collective interest of the built environment that illustrate the past use and development of the Character Area. The buildings within the extension have a collective interest created by the mix of Georgian and Victorian listed buildings, which facilitate an understanding of architectural links between the north and south sides of the Street, in relation to 163-165 on the south side and 120-122 on the north side and the contextual links between the north and south sides of the Street. In addition, there is a collective interest in the subtle chalet-styling of the 2½ storey stucco buildings on the north side of Oxford Road. Number 124, and the other is a Building of Townscape Merit, 134. The little group of detached and semi-detached buildings between Bedford Road and the entrance to the Central Swimming Pool car park are rare survivors of the more suburban development of scatters of villas in large gardens that characterised the early development of Oxford Road.

The coarsening of the finer historic grain of the terraces has also occurred due to large scale of modern developments that are out of character with the historic scale and quality of built environment. While the set-back within larger plots is an aspect of siting and location shared with large community buildings, including the historic cinema what detracts is the non-community function of these new builds, which are either flats or commercial units. In addition, their architecture is incongruous to the rest of the street. Due to the need to enhance these buildings within an area that is otherwise consistent with and linked to the character of the area, these sites have been highlighted as opportunities for enhancement.

PROSPECT STREET EXTENSION OF OXFORD ROAD CHARACTER AREA

Special historic interest of the Character Area

Oxford Road was one of the Medieval routes into and out of Reading town centre and that spatial relationship grew with the gradual building of residences and shops expanding from the centre. Prospect Street is one of two connector roads between Oxford Road and Castle Hill. It contributes to the understanding of the cumulative historic interest by illustrating the foresight of Mr Swallow, who created the two link roads of Prospect Street and Russell Street from Oxford Road to the south and Castle Hill. The street also evidences the influences of both Oxford Road and Castle Hill in the way secondary link routes developed distinct from, but stimulated by, those primary routes. The location of Prospect Street in relation to Oxford Road and Castle Hill also influenced how those residential homes changed over time.

Special Architectural interest of the Character Area

Prospect Street contributes to the architectural interest of the Oxford Road Character Area by directly duplicating the spatial development of the earlier Georgian terraces and later Victorian infill. The street provides a snap shot of different architectural responses to the expansion of housing indicating an avoidance of segregation between larger and smaller homes, without similar evidence elsewhere in the Conservation Area. It is the mix of architectural styles that contributes to the local distinctiveness and identity, separate from but connected with Oxford Road. For example: 1-9 Prospect Street are rare examples of artisan cottages from the Georgian era; 11-23 Prospect Street are larger, Georgian terraces; and 4-26 Prospect Street are late Victorian/Edwardian properties, with distinct architectural detailing. Architectural detailing became more important over time as seen by the addition of later architectural features at Number 23 directly influenced by the Victorian/Edwardian infill opposite and in the area.

RUSSELL STREET AND STREETS EAST AND EXTENDING INTO ANSTEY ROAD/BODY ROAD

Special historic interest of the Character Area

The spatial relationship between the Conservation Area and Reading town centre began as historic routes along Oxford Road and Castle Street/Castle Hill and developed into a suburban and then urban extension with historic connections and shared architectural features. This Character Area aids the understanding of cumulative historic and architectural interest of the wider Conservation Area. The grain and character of the housing on Anstey and Body Roads is a later expression of the earlier design of Baker Street terraces. Moreover, 3-11 Baker Street provides that sense of entering into an historic streetscape of tightly arranged small, high quality polychrome terraces on small plots, designed to create compact yet attractive and affordable housing. In addition to forming a clear entrance into this Character Area, the revised boundary clarifies and aids the understanding of the spatial relationship between Castle Street, more recently severed by the IDR. The harsh boundary of the IDR is softened somewhat through the avenue of trees along Body Road.

The plots on which the Carey Centre and the Salvation Army are located were re-gifted to the two locally-based churches after the loss of land subsumed through the development of the Broad Street Mall, 50 years ago. Both buildings are prominent when entering the Conservation Area from Castle Street and present opportunities for enhancement, particularly further softening of the western edge of the IDR.

The Carey Centre shares functional and associative links with Carey Baptist Church and other Carey Baptist sites in the area including the Oasis church-run community centre at the corner of Baker Street and Carey Street, holding collective interest within the Conservation Area. The two buildings are important in illustrating the past use and development of the historic and functional links between the churches and the local community. In addition, the Carey Centre contributes to the Conservation Area through the rarely experienced openness provided by the private green space around the Carey Centre. The Salvation Army, being used for community meetings, also contributes communal value.

Special Architectural interest of Character Area

The early residential development of this Conservation Area is characterised by three waves of development 1) large houses along Oxford Road and Castle Hill, 2) large Georgian terraces along Russell Street and 3) later infill of smaller terraces as demand for houses in Reading continued to grow. There is a spatial relationship between the properties in the wider Conservation Area and those on Anstey and Body Roads, which are tertiary roads connected with the secondary roads and located between the primary roads of Oxford Road and Castle Hill. Characteristic of these small terraces are their high quality of construction; they were built to fit within the remaining space available along tertiary roads at the turn of the 20c, in small plots with small gardens.

The terraces along Anstey and Body Roads provide a local distinctiveness and identity in a way that is similar to the small terraces on Belle Vue Road and Franklin and Clifton Streets. They share the same scale, being two-up – two-down, and share architectural features such as bay windows, open porches and brick detailing seen on the west side of Anstey Road. In addition, there are identical architectural features on the small terraces along the north side of Body Road and the south side of Anstey Road. The enclosed and compact nature of these small terraces with tiny gardens adds to the sense of local distinctiveness, to the extent that there is a shared sense of identity between these streets. Even within these small terraces,

distinctiveness is added through greater detailing on the facades of the larger terraces, 1-3 and 5-13 Anstey Road and Body Road. For these reasons, the proposed extension forms an integral part of the distinctive 19th and 20^c responses to Reading's population growth, i.e. small, high quality houses in small plots.

CASTLE HILL AND CASTLE STREET AND THE COLEY PLACE EXTENSION

Special historic interest of the Character Area

The spatial relationship between Castle Hill and the historic town centre was formed through the slow growth and expansion of residences along Castle Hill, particularly the fashionable villas centred initially around the Castle Hill, Coley Avenue and Bath Road junction. This connection slowly expanded with the development of further road networks and the infill of large and small terraces resulting in the melding of the centre with this former suburb. That historic connection with the town was severed by the construction of the IDR.

In addition to forming a clear entrance into this Character Area, the revised boundary clarifies and aids the understanding of the spatial relationship with the road as it was severed from the town by the IDR. The harsh boundary of the IDR is softened a little by the green space at the roundabout and contributes to the protected views into and out of the Conservation Area (Views 6A and 6B). Behind the green space, 1-15 Castle Street was built as a replacement to a listed building. Whilst the building does not hold historic interest, the materials and massing do not detract from the Conservation Area and the area on which it stands forms part of the balanced proportion between the large historic houses and the wide, sweeping curve of Castle Hill.

Furthermore, redrawing the Conservation Area boundary to include 3-7 Coley Place aids the understanding of the importance of the edge of the escarpment as a geographical feature that forms part of the edge of the Conservation Area. 3-7 Coley Place are the last surviving houses of what was originally a ten-house long terrace at the edge of the escarpment and illustrates the development of smaller terraces off Castle Hill. In addition, Coley Place is one of the southern roads off Castle Hill that form part of the growth along secondary residential streets and contributes to the spatial relationship between Castle Hill and Reading town centre. Furthermore, 3-7 Coley Place contributes to a protected view within this Conservation Area (View 17). The open space to the south of 3-7 Coley Place softens the hard edges of the IDR and is highlighted as an opportunity for enhancement.

Special Architectural interest of the Character Area

3-7 Coley Place formed part of the expansion of town development to the east. That spatial relationship eventually melded the two areas together until they were severed by the construction of the IDR. 3-7 Coley Place evidences the contrast between the large town houses built along Castle Hill, and smaller, later infill development. These buildings add to local distinctiveness through being designed to be incorporated onto the edge of the escarpment, which is particularly evident in the way the basement floors have been constructed. Each basement is open to the back gardens, which slope steeply from the road down the hillside. The buildings illustrate the influence of the siting in the design of these buildings and also evidences the link between the pressure to build houses, even on the edge of a steep hillside and the rapid growth of Reading in the latter half of the 19th century. Including this extension to the Character Area aids the understanding of their individual and cumulative historic and

architectural interest. Furthermore, 3-7 Coley Place are the sole examples of a mansarded roof terrace with dormers in the Conservation Area.

CASTLE CRESCENT AND STREETS SOUTH OF CASTLE HILL AND THE MANSFIELD ROAD EXTENSION

Special historic interest of the Character Area

The houses of Mansfield Road was constructed within the same time period as Castle Crescent and share spatial relationships, not least that Coley Park Road was constructed as the only connecting road with Mansfield Road creating a quiet and exclusive enclave and cul-de-sac area, which is quite rare in developments of this period in Reading. A gap was retained in the line of the plots to the south of Castle Crescent to facilitate the construction of that connecting road. These relationships between the roads aid the understanding of their individual and cumulative historic and architectural interest. In particular, 23-25 was situated to provide an end view along Coley Park Road from the junction with Castle Crescent.

The buildings along Mansfield Road hold collective interest, illustrating the past use of the area as a suburban idyll and reflecting the early development of this fashionable part of town.

Special Architectural interest of the Character Area

The majority of the buildings on Mansfield Road are Buildings of Townscape Merit. Collectively they share the formal design principles with those villas in the Castle Crescent Character Area. These are pairs of semi-detached villas in large gardens. They evidence the same variety of architectural form that is distinctive to this area, with a residential style that is unique to this Character Area. However, the architectural detailing in polychrome, stone, and tile embellishment is similar to the detailing seen elsewhere in the Character Area.

Appendix 4: Public Consultation