

Russell Street/ Castle Hill Conservation Area



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, Esq. 10 October, 1817

First draft re-appraisal presented for the approval of
Reading Borough Council
developed by the Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC)
and the Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association (BSANA)
April 2017



Initial Statement

This appraisal will have been carried out as requested by Reading Borough Council working with local community representative as advised by Historic England. 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, and whilst many of the same situations remain, the passage of time has affected the conservation area and so that appraisal has been expounded upon to create this report.

This assessment has been prepared by the Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) in conjunction with the Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association (BSANA), using the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit as advised by Historic England.

The Council also acknowledges the advice and assistance of Historic England, particularly by providing, in February and April of 2016, training workshops in Conservation Area appraisals for the Council officers and local community representatives taking part in the appraisal process.

The assessment provides detail on the historic and architectural interest of this area and positive features of its character, as well as highlighting issues that are negatively affecting the Conservation Area.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Initial Statement 1

Statement of Special Interest 3-4

- Key characteristic features (*significance and positive features*) 5
- Issues and Vulnerabilities (*negative features and vulnerabilities*) 6-7
- Overview of Recommended Measures and Opportunities for Enhancement 7-8

Introduction

- Policy Context 9-11
- Public Consultation 11

Landscape Setting

- Geographical location 12
- Geology and topography 13-14
- Setting 14-15

Historical Development and Archaeology 15-21

- Archaeology

Spatial Analysis

- Key positive characteristics 22
- Plan form and layout 22-24
- Views and Vistas 25-32
- Trees and green landscape 32-36
- *Biodiversity* 32-36

Buildings and Public Realm

- Key positive characteristics 36
- Building types and forms 36- 46
- Materials, Styles and Features 46- 47
- Buildings of Local Historical Interest and Positive Buildings- Listed buildings 48- 51
- Public realm 51-56

Character Areas

- Castle Street/Castle Hill 56- 61
- Oxford Road 62-67
- Russell Street and streets east 67- 77
- Streets west of Russell Street to Prospect Street 78- 81
- Castle Crescent and the streets south of Castle Hill 82-85

Negative Features, Issues and Vulnerabilities 86-87

Recommended Measures and Opportunities for Enhancement 87- 92

Conservation Area Boundary Review 93- 96

Conservation Area at Risk Statement (optional heading)

APPENDICES

SOURCE

Statement of Special Interest of the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area

The remarkable range of architectural styles in the area, ranging from the late 17c to the early 20 c, shows how 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 garden suburb for members the town's elite and, later, as infill housing for employees of Reading's new manufacturing industries, strengthened by the arrival of the railway. The story of that development is told in the emergence of the street pattern and the microcosm of a diverse but representative collection of many of the urban, terraced domestic English architectural styles from that time period.

The proud heritage of Reading's brick, tile and terracotta manufacturing skills is found scattered throughout the area and displayed throughout each of the represented time periods. It is the legibility of each of the five distinct character areas that tells the story of Reading's domestic development through the building stock and plan layout, revealing what is the essential character, charm and interest of the Russell Street Castle Hill Conservation Area.

1. **The Castle Street/ Castle Hill character area** to the south forms a rich leafy corridor along a wide winding road climbing the hill of the chalk escarpment above the river banks of the River Kennet and the Holybrook. Some of the **earliest surviving domestic buildings** in Reading line this street. As the major route westward from London to Bath, the road built up to the west of town initially to serve travellers headed west notably at the grade 2* Kings Arm Inn (154- 160 Castle Hill) with its earliest sections dating to the end of the 17c and at The Horse and Jockey (now the Castle Tap at 120 Castle Street), a public house first mentioned in the late 17c. The north side of the road filled in initially in the 18c, but large villas sprang up along the route on both sides in the early 19c .107 Castle Street's Ionic pilastered façade with its stables and back garden plot still intact, is a fine example of the style of grand houses built to impress for Reading's wealthier citizens. However, it is the intersection of Castle Hill, Coley Avenue and the Bath Road, that became the epicentre of the fashionable place to live for Reading's wealthiest. The rusticated stucco front Yeomanry House and the early red brick Georgian house of the Swallow family remain as examples. The locally famous Jesse family of developers lived out the entire 19c within the former King's Arms Inn near that intersection.
2. **The Oxford Road character area** shows largely 19c development along what was likely a **medieval artery** out of town in its numerous Georgian terraces, later infilled with more functional Victorian shop fronts throughout the course of the century. Its evidence as a vibrant and busy commercial corridor and market place intermingled with residential living is still evident. Other buildings reflect the changing economy and social life of the road and the surrounding 19c suburb, including the polychrome Oxford Road Community School and three extant historical churches including the Holy Trinity parish church (c1830) with catacombs built into the site of a former gravel pit, the gravel being dug to maintain the Oxford Road. The somewhat ponderously –sized Pavilion (now Lifespring Chapel) was an early 20c cinema and has been well-restored inside. The importance of the Oxford Road's commercial contributions to the area and to the town is punctuated at the western end of the Conservation Area by the railway bridge coursing over it.
3. The **character area to the East of Russell Street** is one of the two areas situated between these two major roads which had been used for market gardening in the 18c that providing bulbs, fruit and vegetables for Reading's residents. However, this industry began to give way in the first decades of the 19c to connector roads between the

Oxford Road and Castle Hill/ Castle Street as the need for housing became more profitable. The remarkable Georgian west side of Russell Street retains a striking stand of largely red brick housing designed to have a fine vantage point down to the town centre originally gazing out over the gardens of Mrs. Zinzan's fields to the east. The semi-detached villa at 48-50 Russell Street was built of Bath stone and developed by same architects that built the Bath stone villas of the Eldon Square Conservation Area to the east of the town centre. Waylen Street and Zinzan Street filled in c 1830-40 and provided large, but less grand, practical Victorian terraced housing for Reading's thriving businessmen along their straight roads. Jesse Terrace was developed from the 1850s onwards by the Jesse family and remains as an "island" in the area as a fine, well-cared for example of a later Victorian terraced street. The charming large gardens in front of the curved metal-covered verandas on the symmetrical facing terraces are of considerable note in Reading.

4. The residential roads making up the **character area to the west of Russell Street** was filled in towards the end of the 19c, in gardens and amongst dotted early Georgian housing (of note at 61-79 Baker Street) and is largely comprised of charming polychrome terraced two- up two-down households for Reading's working families buoyed by industry brought in with the advent of the railway through town. The only purpose - built synagogue in Berkshire, at the corner of Goldsmid Road and Clifton Street built in 1900, is a charming Moorish- influenced style with polychrome and terracotta detailing that speaks to the variety of people that called Reading home and points to the rich tradition of non- conformist and alternative churches that still dot the area.
5. The character area to the **south of Castle Hill** is more varied but notable largely for the large polychrome and terracotta villas along Castle Crescent and Mansfield Road again aimed to provide Reading's wealthier citizenry with grand homes. The beginning of Coley Avenue exhibits impressive high brick walls behind an attractive allée of trees that is late 18c in origin and served as the long grand entrance to the former Coley Manor south of Berkeley Avenue. Field Road's more modest two- up, two- down polychrome grey brick housing along its eastern side from the turn of the 20c are not dissimilar to the houses of Clifton and Franklin Street built during this same time period.

The town centre has influenced the entire conservation area with an urban feel, most noticeable in the absence of trees throughout much of the area. There are two sections that largely provide the green for the area. The trees of Coley Avenue and Castle Crescent set off the high point of the Conservation Area with the attractive green allée view to the south. The leafy thoroughfare of Castle Street/ Castle Hill leading to the even leafier Bath Road with the late Victorian planned-street Downshire Square Conservation Area just past this conservation area, provide the most significant green around. It is of positive note that new trees are being positioned by the Council along the roads where possible and the Oxford Road's recent plantings will soon benefit the Road by softening its harsh urban appearance.

III- advised modern development and renovations from the 1970s onwards has wreaked damage on the Conservation Area, most notably along the Oxford Road in significant sections extending to the railway bridge along the northern side. Other infill residential developments have been less obvious in the area, being carefully set- back from the main streets. There remains scope for improvement of some of these sites, but this has not removed the historic legibility of the area overall.

Despite infill and areas where poor maintenance has over-taken, there clearly remains significant historic structure throughout the Conservation Area and a fairly significant quantity of original windows, doors, rails and brick walls and charming terraces remain to enchant visitors to the area. The story of the domestic, economic and social lifestyle of Reading's residents from the late 18c to the early 20c can still be easily read in the streets of the Area. It is this factor, in the end, that is the Conservation Area's predominant interest and charm and

the primary reason for its preservation and enhancement.

Key Characteristic Features (positive features, negative features and vulnerabilities)

Significance and Key Positive Features:

- 1) Set along two major routes out of Reading with medieval origins: Castle Street/ Castle Hill leading to the Bath Road and the Oxford Road towards Pangbourne and Oxford
- 2) Clear, understandable layout of infill connector roads to accommodate a rapidly growth in population in the 19c
- 3) A microcosm of Reading's residential building styles in a concentrated area: from the late 18c to the early 20c encompassing Georgian villas and terraces, large 3- story Victorian single family terraces, polychrome 2-up, 2- down terraced houses and large Victorian and Edwardian villas
- 4) Prodigious use of brick throughout the different domestic style periods represented with many exemplary buildings exemplifying the local brick, tile and terracotta industry
- 5) Large Georgian villas and terraces signifying the early move to the west of town for the more affluent to take advantage of the "salubrious air" upwind of local industry concentrated along Castle Street/Castle Hill, Coley Hill, the Oxford Road and Russell Street
- 6) Clear views north from several vantage points to the Caversham escarpment and leafy hills
- 7) The view south along Coley Avenue and its allée of trees that once lead to Coley Manor
- 8) A number of well- noted mature trees (largely along Coley Avenue and Castle Street/Castle Hill and the Bath Road) with a positive green impact, and a programme of adding trees where there is a lack of green by the LPA
- 9) The grade II* King's Arm Inn at 154-160 Castle Hill, which after its time as an inn, served to protect French Priests during the French revolution and was home to the Jesse family of developers during the entirety of the 19c
- 10) the parish church of the Holy Trinity with its catacombs beneath built into a gravel pit that supplied gravel for the development and maintenance of the Oxford Road
- 11) The only purpose- built synagogue in Berkshire (listed) and a high surviving quantity of historic non-conformist churches and houses of worship in the area
- 12) The striking Jesse Terrace- distinguished by well-proportioned terraces on both sides with metal verandas built by the local Jesse family
- 13) Yeomanry House with its gatehouse and front garden onto Castle Hill and Mr. Swallow's house: reminders of the area delineated for Reading's elite in the early 19c
- 14) Fox Talbot's studio at 55 Baker Street – used during the production of the first book published with actual photographs: "The Pencil of Nature"
- 15) Oxford Road Community School – an attractive listed school in good condition and well- used by the community
- 16) Two pubs listed as "Assets of Community Value" at the Nag's Head- a notable faux Tudor and The Castle Tap- (formerly the Horse and Jockey) first mentioned in the late 17c
- 17) A solid number of listed houses concentrated along Castle Hill/Castle Street, Russell Street, the Oxford Road and dotted throughout
- 18) A good number of Buildings of Townscape Merit dotted through-out the area

Negative Features:

- 1) Visual impact of poorly maintained housing stock due to HMO (houses in multiple occupation) proliferation largely on streets off of the Oxford Road: Waylen Street, Zinzan Street, Howard Street, Anstey Street and Body Road, the north ends of Russell Street and Prospect Street and to a lesser degree in patches along Baker Street and Carey Street
- 2) Excessive retail and estate agent signage in the area especially along the Oxford Road that is frequently redundant, in poor condition or quality with garish or unsympathetic colours, lighting or styling inappropriate to a conservation area
- 3) Continuation of anti- social behaviour (ASB), and crime along the Oxford Road, hampered by off- licenses and in streets directly off the Oxford Road with the high transient population and associated persons that feed off the negative environment
- 4) Redundant and excessive overhead telecom wires which also denigrates property frontages with unkempt wires, excessive satellite dishes, pipes and cables on to support high-density household populations
- 5) Architecturally unsympathetic extensions and alterations inclusive of poor quality dormers, loss of chimney stacks and chimney pots on properties to accommodate an excess of persons on the site
- 6) Poorly maintained property frontages with: the loss of period walls and railings, development of hard standings for bins, occasional dropped kerb parking and poorly kept property frontages with fly- tipping in front gardens and on pavements throughout the area
- 7) Excessive and on-going replacement of original windows and doors to modern uPVC, inclusive of listed properties
- 8) Inappropriate painting and recladding of façades and poor roofing material substitutes and replacements
- 9) Poor condition of the public realm with: the proliferation of bins on pavements, excessive and redundant street signage, unsympathetic street furniture and modern street lighting inappropriate to a conservation area
- 10) Poor condition of the historic environment along the Oxford Road, inclusive of excessive wires, and poor store- front conversions
- 11) Poorly considered modern infill – largely along the Oxford Road but also along the west sides of Field Road and Coley Hill in mass
- 12) Lack of green on most of the area's streets
- 13) Poor quality tarmac pavements and roads detracting from the historic setting
- 14) High levels of traffic along the major historical thoroughfares of the Oxford Road and Castle Street/Castle Hill

Vulnerabilities:

- 1) continual degradation of housing stock by low cost conversions and poor maintenance standards with HMO and multi-occupancy developments of absentee and buy-to-let landlords

- 2) Continued rise in the imbalance of the social and community structure of the area with single person households (HMO and small flats) dominating larger single family units (single family homes)
- 3) Continuing loss of historic architectural features and detailing, such as traditional doors and windows, roofing materials, features, or the refacing and repainting of historical façades
- 4) Loss of locally distinctive materials on roofs and replacement bricks with modern, poor quality substitute materials
- 5) Continuing development of hard-standings in front gardens for bin storage
- 6) Loss of boundary definitions including locally distinctive high brick walls and metal fencing along street fronts and in back gardens especially. Also, rapid loss of brick wall frontages (1m or less in height)
- 7) Continuing over-head wire accumulation with increased population and non-removal of redundant wires
- 8) Continuing wire and satellite dish accumulation of residential frontages due to increasing and transient population
- 9) Increasing infill of back gardens with unsympathetic extensions and additional housing
- 10) On-going and continual crime and ASB feeding off the Oxford Road into residential streets continuing to drag down the area from a healthier, more positive residential climate
- 11) Continued loss of ability of the Local Planning Authority to be able to properly monitor the Conservation Area in terms of enforcements and the creation of Article 4s due to financial cutbacks from the Central Government

Overview of Recommended Measures and Opportunities for Enhancement

There are a number of high-level measures that this reappraisal delves into in the latter section: "Recommended Measures and Opportunities for Enhancement" that are suggested to be considered for the area. In summary form these are:

1) **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, we acknowledge that the history of the Area is inexorably linked to both the Castle Street/Castle Hill route out of the town centre but also that of the route development along the Oxford Road defined penultimately with the advent of the railway in the 19th c. which lies at the Oxford Road area planned for incorporation into the Conservation Area. The infill residential streets of the Area developed between these two roads, but it is the relationship and story of that development that the Conservation Area is about. It is in this understanding and renaming that we capture the historical significance of this Conservation Area and send a clear signal to the town about the importance of the development of this first residential suburb to the west of Reading's town centre.

2) **Article 4 expansion:**

This reappraisal notes the positive effects that the two Article 4 Directions that have been placed on Jesse Terrace since the last Conservation Area appraisal in 2004. Since that 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.

Considering these issues, recommendations for the implementation of, and the specifications of Article 4 Directions that would best serve the area are discussed at the end of this appraisal in greater detail. This appraisal is mindful of the fact that no fees are collected with planning applications in Article 4 areas. With reduced funding to local authorities limiting the ability to have a fully staffed planning department, this works very much against the LPA's ability to easily use or implement this tool for the management of conservation areas. Bearing this in mind, it remains ultimately the job of this appraisal to recommend solutions for the management of the Conservation Area. Article 4 Directions are the single best tool authorised by the Government to do this. Therefore, the recommendation of their use for this area is one that must be made at this time.

3) Historic England Heritage at Risk Listing, Conservation Area Management Plan and involvement of Community Volunteers

In discussion with Historic England, and their Heritage at Risk team, and with the reappraisal noting throughout the unchecked decline of portions of the conservation area since the 2004 appraisal, placing the Conservation Area on the Heritage at Risk list is the first step in "putting things right again" for the Conservation Area. It acknowledges that no single organisation or causal agent is solely "at fault" but it allows the Conservation Area to be recognized for its importance and significance to the history of Reading, and also acknowledges the current situation and the continued vulnerabilities if measures are not taken. By placing the Conservation Area on the At Risk register, this allows the LPA, in conjunction with active and interested community groups to create a Conservation Area Management Plan to put in place meaningful steps to reverse the on-going situations causing damage and ultimately to preserve and enhance the Conservation Area.

4) Seeking funding for Improvements to the Public Realm and Properties

Whilst funding to preserve Conservation Areas and heritage in general continues to be reduced, in listing this conservation area on the Heritage at Risk listing, funding streams not otherwise available become possibilities. Without this designation, certain funds are not available at all to try to make essential improvements to the Area. The Heritage at Risk designation also gives the Conservation Area increased visibility and acknowledgement of status which can significantly improve the chances for other funding streams. Funds such as the Heritage Lottery Fund Townscape Heritage Scheme which offers funds from £100,000 to £2 million need to be examined for direct improvement along the Oxford Road, and a scheme such as Bedford High Street's Back in Business programme needs to be seriously considered. <https://www.hlf.org.uk/our-projects/bedford-high-street-thi>

5) Establishing a specific Management Plan with the Council and Community Groups

The conservation area itself is undoubtedly one that will continue to be able to enhance the understanding and appreciation of Reading's rich and interesting history of residential life from the late 18th century to the early 20th century in its microcosm of building styles and layout. However, in acknowledging in this conservation area as the asset that it is, we must also be aware of its current problems and vulnerabilities. Without the mutual corporation of the LPA and Active and engaged community groups they will not be significant progress made in eradicating the issues that currently impact the area. In the appendix is an initial list of issues potential remedial actions into those actions are best to be taken by for an initial establishment of a management plan to improve the conservation area.

Introduction

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 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.

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 regards to the management of the fifteen conservation areas within Reading.

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 accurately make these judgements clear, 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 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 advise 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 to base the determination of planning applications on: either for new development or alterations to the existing historical fabric.

Policy Changes and the 2017 Local Plan

It is notable that this year is the 50th anniversary of the Civil Amenities Act of 1967 which created conservation areas in the UK. It is also notable that budgets for planning departments are under their greatest financial challenge since the implementation of that act, and have greater challenges in being able to meet the lofty ideals for the development of conservation areas set forth 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. This conservation area was the third designated in Reading in 1974, suggesting its high level of importance to the Reading community at that time. 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 LPA 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 long overdue for reappraisal. Much has changed since 2004 in terms of policy on a national and local level which has had detrimental effects on this conservation area. Nationally, the revocation of Conservation Area Consent and the introduction of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act of 2013 caused a lessening of planning restrictions that, as noted earlier, have led to substantial harm to the historic fabric of the area and will continue to do so without additional controls put in place and implemented.

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 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.

In 2017, it is expected that Reading Borough Council will adopt a new version of its Local Plan 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 largely 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.

Public Consultation

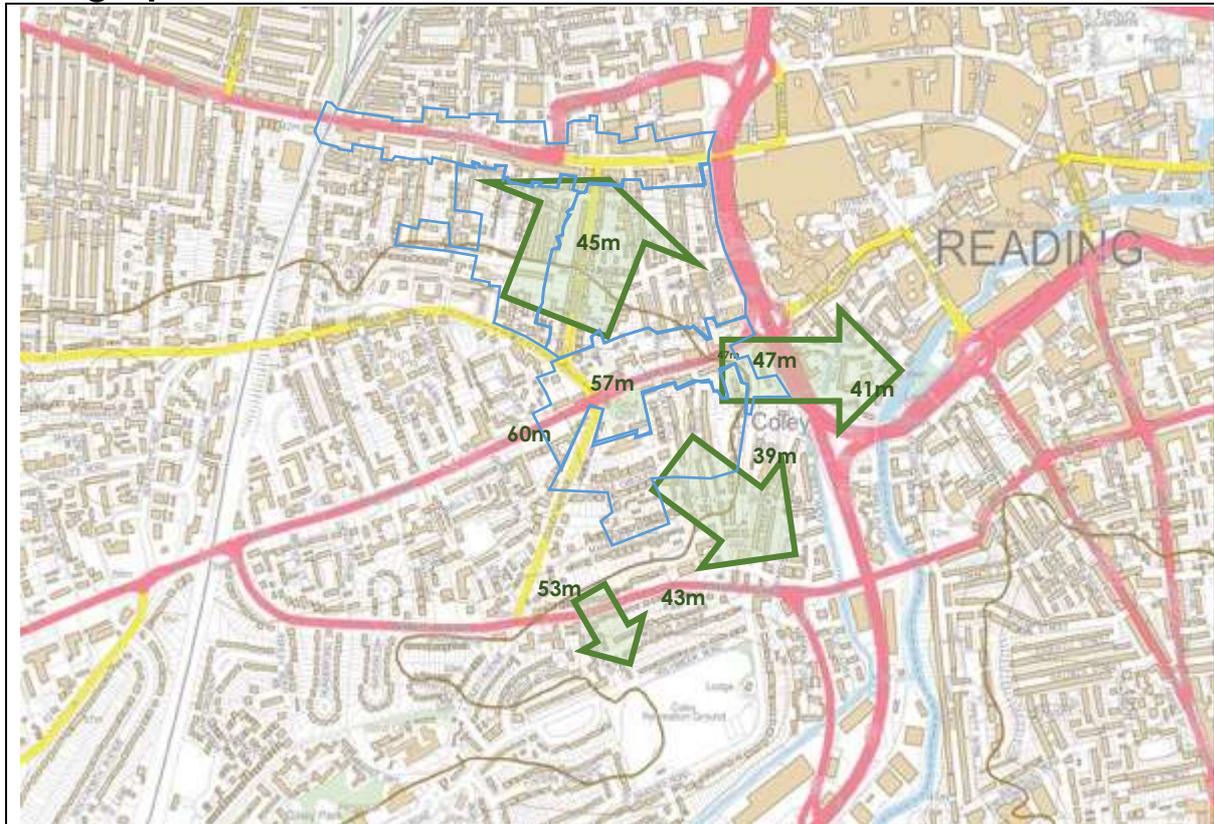
This appraisal is largely in a format recommended by Historic England. It has been prepared in conjunction with the Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) and the Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association (BSANA) after public consultations engaging with residents, businesses and other stakeholders in the area to help define 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 a visual audit of every street in the Conservation Area. This was a useful exercise in terms of gathering the opinions of the local community about the area. This information was compiled and has informed the findings in this appraisal.

By the time of the submission of this draft appraisal to Reading Borough Council by the CAAC and BSANA, two additional public consultations will have been held in 2017. One will be a live Q&A consultation event in March with a guided tour of the area and the other will be an online consultation and survey. By these means it is intended to gather further public opinion that will inform this draft appraisal on the way forward for this Conservation Area.

Landscape Setting

Geographical location



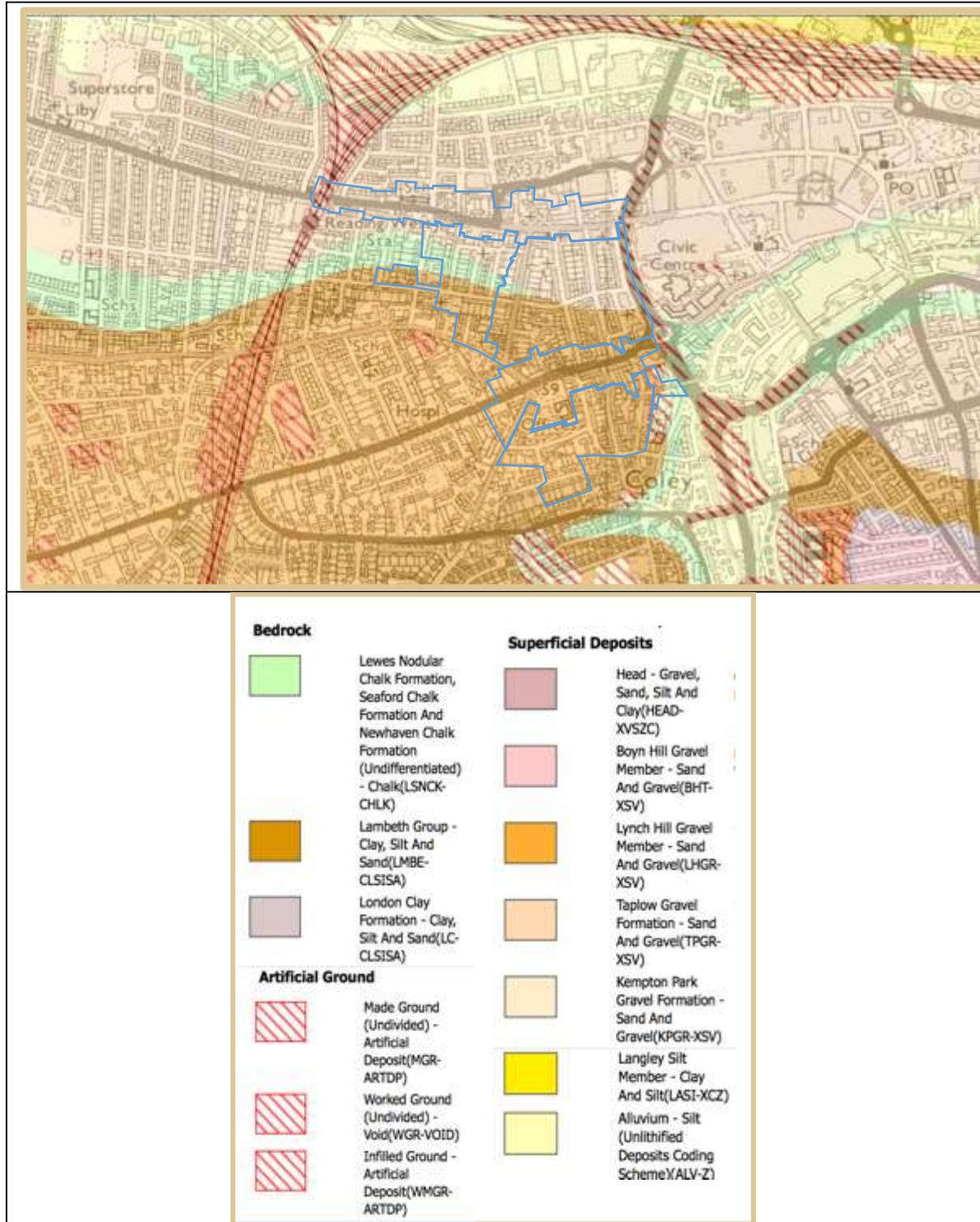
The Conservation Area lies entirely to the west of the c. 1969 Inner Distribution Road (IDR) and is comprised of the largely residential neighbourhood situated along two early roads out of what was the original medieval core of Reading. Castle Street/Castle Hill meets the Bath Road to the west at the intersection of Russell Street, the Tilehurst Road and Coley Avenue which is at the highest point of the Conservation Area. Along the north the Oxford Road is the Conservation Area's boundary line with its mix of commercial and residential buildings. The proposed extended conservation area measures appx 760 metres from the Oxford Road to Mansfield road and roughly the same along the Oxford Road.

The drop off from the peak is most notable towards the south of the conservation area where the chalk escarpment which Castle hill/ Castle Street lay on top of, drops off sharply towards the Holy Brook stream bed and down Garnet Hill beyond the conservation area itself. This appreciable difference in height is also extremely noticeable from Field Road looking up towards the backs of the houses along Coley Hill.

The area flattens out quickly to the north of the high ridge of Castle Hill, a fact that made the area ideal for the grid street layout structure of the streets to the east and west of Russell Street.

The drop off to the north from the high point of the intersection of Castle Hill /Coley Avenue and Russell Street towards the Oxford Road, is most visually noticeable along Russell Street as it descends to the setting of the Holy Trinity parish church at the bottom.

Geology and topography



The conservation area sits atop a high mound of clay, silt and sand covering most of the southern portion of the area. Castle Hill and Castle Street lie along the high ridge of that clay which is a gradually eroding layer that exposes its chalk base around this rise. As the land falls away from this ridge towards the north and to the south east, the clay ridge gives way to underlying chalk. Old chalk mine areas to the south of the conservation area have had to have been shored up to prevent significant subsidence in the area.

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, the alluvial silt deposits of that river bed are also 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 late 19c 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 (c 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.

Setting within surrounding area

The Conservation Area comprises the first residential neighbourhood area to the west of the town centre when crossing the IDR. Prior to the development of the IDR, the area was far more connected to the town, but it is now distinctly separated from it, and as such forms its own distinct neighbourhood area. With the new tall towers of Chatham Place, to the north, it lies in even sharper contrast to the town centre. The insertion of the IDR exacted incredible change to the relationship of the conservation area to the town and comparatively to before its creation, few threads remain.

Those associations can most keenly be noted in the perceptible tie between Castle Street in town and Castle Street on the conservation area side of the IDR which becomes Castle Hill towards the peak of the intersection with the Bath Road and Coley Avenue. The end of the street closest to the IDR still retains its Castle Street name, a fact few residents realise any longer, most assuming that the name of the entire route west of the IDR is "Castle Hill". Additionally, Howard Road provides a sad reminder of the other side of the street which was demolished for the creation of the IDR. Howard Street was literally cut down the centre and the row of trees shielding the street from the IDR, sit atop the wrecks of the demolished houses of the east side of Howard 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 characteristically 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. Prospect Street, also serves as the East- West Reading boundary line.

The turn of the century, Victorian, polychrome brick, two- up two-down, terraced housing evidenced in Clifton Street and Franklin Street continues westward south of the Oxford Road stylistically out to Norcot Ward.

Also, to the west of the conservation area, sandwiched in between Tilehurst 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 comprised largely of attractive grand polychrome villas of the late Victorian, 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 19c that are attractively set and potentially deserved of some sort of future protection, possibly by inclusion into the Downshire Square Conservation Area, but this needs to be further analysed. The area was seriously considered for inclusion into this conservation area, but it was considered that such action would have made the conservation area entirely too large and unmanageable.

The area to the southeast of Castle Crescent and Mansfield Road comprises an interesting area of small terraced working- man terraced cottages mixed in with impressive polychrome villas. It is an area that likely in the future should be analysed for its value in the creation of a conservation area of its own, possibly incorporating in the castle Crescent/ Mansfield Road area.

Coley Avenue progresses out to the south and west from its intersection with Castle Hill and is noted for its allée of trees that have shrouded the Avenue and its pathway to the former Coley Park Manor since at least the end of the 18c as documented on maps of that time.

Slightly to the north of the conservation area are a few remnants of Georgian and Victorian housing dotted along the west side of the Caversham Road. Just to the north of the railway line is the Bell Tower area with a well –preserved residential area consisting of small, two –up- two –down late Victorian housing surrounding the E. P. Collier School with its bell tower on top. The presence of many converted gaslight light poles in that area are of note.

Historical Development and Archaeology



looking up to the southern end of the conservation area
and the mythical "ruins of the castle", (BRO)

Archaeology and history

Buried heritage

Buried heritage assets add to the significance of a conservation area because the physical remains of the past which provide insights into the evolution of the area. Buried heritage assets include standing remains and built structures, buried foundations and non-structural features and finds. Though there are no Scheduled Monuments within the Conservation Area, there are a series of non-scheduled heritage assets pre-dating the Victorian period. Buried heritage assets are recorded on the local Historic Environment Record (HER) which is held by Reading Borough Council and are discussed within this historical section intermingled with researched history.

Up to the 12th century

There is evidence within today's conservation area of limited pre-12th century activity, in the form of a small number of Prehistoric and Roman finds. A number of chance Prehistoric finds of pottery and coins were recorded within the Conservation Area over the years. The majority are simply referenced to Castle Hill as the exact location is unknown. Hunting and gathering tools may represent casual loss rather than occupation and consist of a flint arrowhead and a bronze arrowhead, spearheads and an axehead. Finds indicating other forms of subsistence consist of coins and sherds of hand-made pottery. For example, a single Roman coin with the head of the Emperor Honorius was found on the surface in a garden in Hosier Street (demolished c 1967 for the IDR just to the east of the Conservation Area).

Reading was a town that made its mark throughout its pre- medieval and medieval history as a crossroads, not only along the River Thames and the Kennett, but also as the crossing of early north- south and east – west roads. What role that conflux of transportation routes had precisely in establishing a population is a bit less sure.

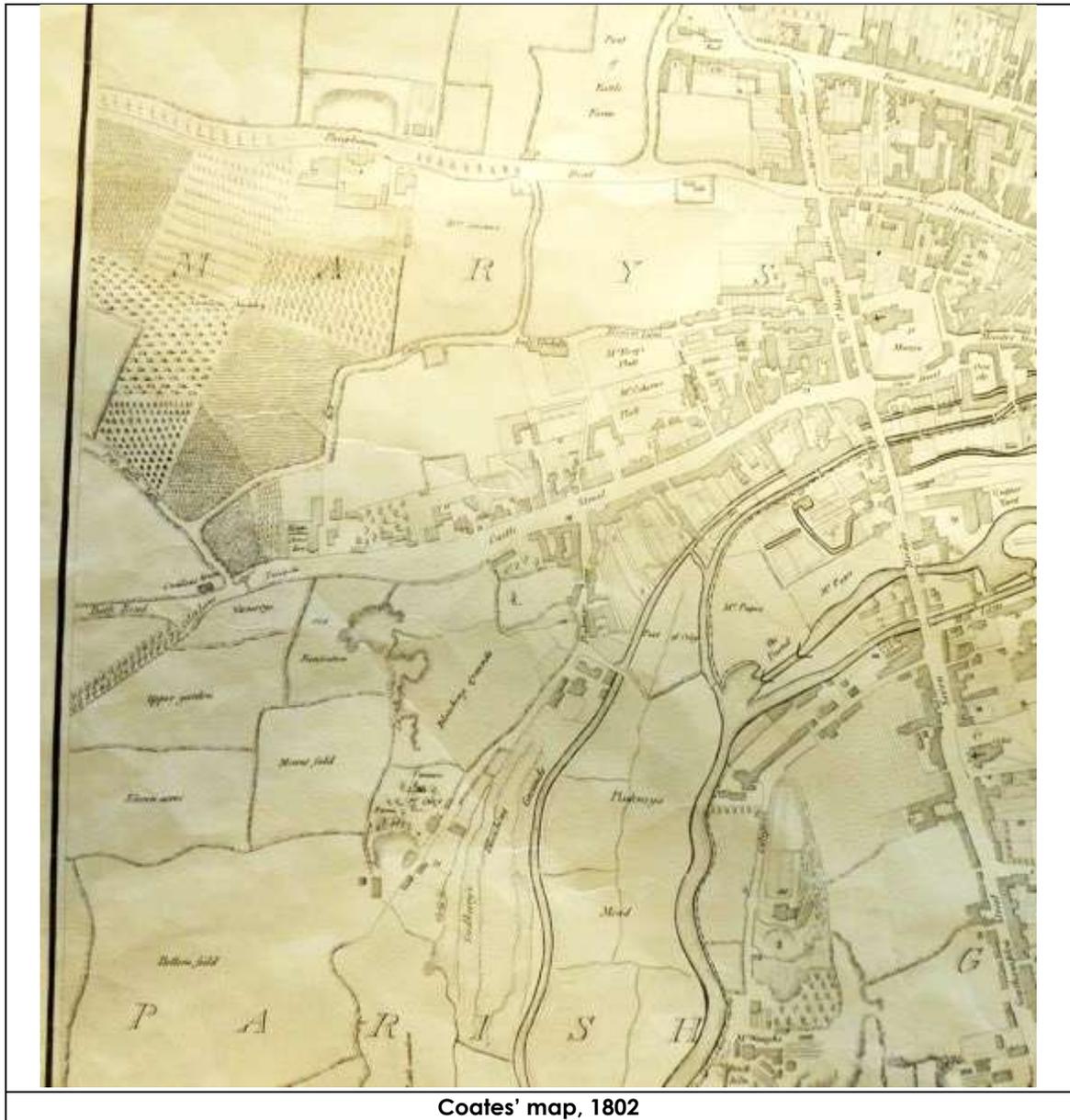
The Saxon tribe, the Readingas, settled the town in the 6c where the Thames and River Kennet meet. By the mid- 9 c, Reading had become part of the south-western kingdom of Wessex and was a royal town serving as a centre of royal administration. By the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086, Reading belonged to the King, included a small borough and had two manors a mint and was market town. (*Downshire Square Conservation Area Appraisal*)

There is some documentary evidence to suggest the existence of a Norman or Saxon castle west of the town centre in the area of Castle Street/Castle Hill in the 11c and 12c, but the evidence is scant at best, and the primary evidence of any sort of site existing lies in the name of Castle Street. (*Reading, Slade*) As no archeological evidence has ever been located to prove its location or confirm its existence, it is reasonably conjectured that any fortification that did exist was never anything more than of wood or sod.

It was when Henry I built Reading Abbey in the early 12c, that the town 's focus shifted to life around the Abbey and the towns' substantial cloth –making industry. When the Abbey was dismantled during the Dissolution, Reading progressively developed its trades with woolen and silk weaving and leather goods. In 1560 Elizabeth I confirmed the royal charter granted by Henry VIII, conferring greater powers of self-government to the town. (*RSCH CA appraisal, 2004*)

Medieval life in Reading and the area

The Conservation Area lies just beyond to the west of the medieval core of Reading, which was centred on St Marys Parish. St. Mary's Parish was at the crossroads of two major early routes. The north – south route from Oxford to Winchester and Silchester and beyond, and the east – west post-Roman road from London to Bath. Only two archaeological finds represent activity within the Conservation Area at that time: a medieval carinated bowl and an iron arrowhead.



Post-medieval settlement focal points

An important archaeological feature of the Post-medieval landscape was the Civil War Defences. The English Civil War (1642–1651) was a series of armed conflicts between Parliamentarians and Royalists over the manner of England's government. In 1642 part of the town was encircled by defences for the first time, consisting of bastions linked by earth banks. The earthworks ran along the west side of the town centre from north near the site of the present IDR bridge at the Oxford Road south along present day Howard Road, Body

Road, Anstey Road and ending at the site of one of the Civil War bastions, named Forlorne Byre, located near the modern-day street of Field Road, as illustrated on the 1643 Siege of Reading map. There is no extant sign of any defensive earthworks today.

Reading saw action in the first Civil War as Royalist troops garrisoned in the town and were driven out by the Parliamentary Army in April of 1643. The defences were slighted in May 1644.

Reading remained a Parliamentary possession for the remainder of the War except for one brief Royalist skirmish. In 1688 Reading saw the only major military action of the Glorious Revolution which was a decisive victory for those loyal to William of Orange. It was celebrated in Reading for hundreds of years thereafter. However, the economy of the town was badly affected by the Civil War and a visitor commented in the early 18th century that '*...its houses are mean and the streets though pretty large, [were] unpaved*'. (RSCH CA)

The eastern half of the Conservation Area, between Oxford Road and the southern end of Coley Hill was part of the Post-medieval settlement core of Reading as illustrated on John Rocque's map of 1761. It had previously been open fields that became part of Reading's built environment from the 1540s onwards. Early plots on the north side of what is now Castle Hill were occupied circa 1800, but all of those buildings were demolished or redeveloped to what we see today.

From the mid-18th century onwards, Reading's advantageous location worked in its favour, as it became an increasingly important stopping-off point between Bath and London. Inns, such as the grade II* listed King's Arms Inn (154-160 Castle Hill) and public houses such as the Horse and Jockey (now The Castle Tap at 120 Castle Street) flourished on the road heading west out of town. Regular public coaches began from the Horse and Jockey in 1780 (*cite*).

Much earlier, by Act of Parliament in 1715, the Bath Road between Reading and Punfield (near Theale) was turnpiked and a toll gate was erected at the top of Castle Hill, on the western outskirts of the town, immediately to the east of the private avenue to Coley House. A Turnpike hut and barrier was located on the road delineating the town street of Castle Street (now Castle Hill) as it left town at Bath Road on the outskirt of the town. A further Act in 1729 extended the jurisdiction of the turnpike trustees westward beyond Punfield as far as Speenhamland at Newbury. That Act required the toll gate at the top of Castle Hill to be maintained there unless at any time the turnpike trustees resolved to remove it to another location. The toll gate was moved westward c.1830 about half a mile, to where the town's outskirts had expanded.

Leather tanning continued and a leather tannery lay just south of the present Mansfield Road as identified in the 1802 Coates' map. Other new industries developed, most notably brewing and iron-founding in the town. Boat-building also became a local business, helped by the completion of the Kennet Canal in 1723 and the Kennet and Avon Canal in 1810. (RSCH CA APP)

Before streets of terrace housing were constructed, local industries flourished and within the Conservation Area itself a thriving market gardening business developed. A thriving market gardening business was developed in the area. Swallows' Nurseries is noted on Coates' Map

of 1802. That map also marks Mr. Swallows House nearby (no. 2 Bath Road, on the corner of Russell Street). The business was run by James Swallow, together with his son William Pratt Swallow (1772-1829). They are known to have supplied plants and shrubs to various local estates, notably in the mid 1790's to Purley Park which at that time was being landscaped by Humphry Repton. Notably, William was also a land surveyor and in the 1820's, possibly sensing the need for housing would be a more profitable venture, he redeveloped large parts of his nurseries for private housing.

His obituary in the Reading Mercury of 24 August 1829 observed the changing face of the local landscape at that time:

"This morning there died in the 57th year of his age Mr William Pratt Swallow of Russell Street. He was a man of strong mind and possessed great religious feeling untainted by bigotry....He was the founder of Sydney Terrace, Russell Street and Prospect Street and it is to his enterprise that the inhabitants of this borough are chiefly indebted for this handsome and extensive addition to their town. His talents in Botany and Horticulture were of the first order; he was frequently consulted by noblemen and distinguished florists and to his industry and perseverance the Gardens of this and adjoining counties owe the introduction and bringing to perfection of many of the finest fruits and rare exotics; by his death scientific gardening has sustained a serious loss."

Archaeological investigation around Yeomanry House, originally known as Castlehill House, identified several ditches and discrete Post-medieval features. These ditches could have been related to the documented nursery and gardening on the site prior to the building as noted on Coates' map of 1802.

Additionally, there was a plant nursery just north of the Oxford Road located at Gower Street and Mason Street, named Victoria Nursery as seen on the first edition Ordnance Survey map. "Mrs. Zinzan's Fields" near current day Zinzan Street were also part of the sizable local nursery industry in the area supplying vegetables and fruit to the town and is noted on Coates' map.

Once the rise of change in the area face began with Mr. Swallow's move to dispense with his market gardens in favour of the establishment of housing provision in the area, the face of the area began to see rapid change. Contributing to that, was the well-known Jesse family of developers, who moved into the former King's Arms Inn (154 -160 Castle Hill) at the very start of the 19th century.

The family's mark in terms of development of Victorian housing on the face of Reading was considerable. Three generations of the Jesse family lived at 154-160 Castle Hill and whilst they developed sites throughout Reading, they figured most notably and famously in the development of this conservation area. Three generations of the family were in the development business: each generation passing down from an uncle to a nephew.

The first Jesse to have left his mark on the area was Thomas (1763-1847). He passed the business to his nephew, Thomas Jesse Jr(1795-1879). He, in turn , then took his nephew, Edwin John Springbett Jesse (1842-1921), as his partner in 1871. Edwin continued the business after his uncle's death. Edwin Jesse only left the family homestead in 1902 when he built a sizeable

properly in Upper Warren Avenue in Caversham for himself and his bride, Harriet Clements Sims who was the daughter of Reading brewer, William Sims.

Locally in the conservation area, the family dabbled frequently in its development, and ultimately to the benefit of the local built environment. The family was the developer of Jesse Terrace and Jesse Place (that being the area near the top of Castle Hill surrounding the present-day Yeomanry House). In 1880, they purchased what was known as Castle Hill House (today's Yeomanry House) and its surroundings of an appx. 6 acre site, apparently with hopes of turning the entire area into a succession of streets with housing. A pencil-drawn concept of that development, which never came to pass, is held at the Berkshire Records Office across the street from the former Jesse homestead.

It is simply because of the fortuitous location of the Berkshire Records Office, that the extensive records of the many business and personal activities of this family now reside right within the Conservation Area. The Berkshire Records Office houses the Jesse collection, which consists of no less 10 volumes, 176 bundles, 199 documents and 4 rolls that had been kept at the former family home at 154- 160 Castle Hill. They provide a fascinating look in to the life of this very well-known local family.



**Possible portrait of Thomas Jesse (BRO)
found at 154- 160 Castle Hill**

The local area was also the site of Henry Fox Talbot's photography studio at 55 Baker Street in the mid 1840s. It was likely that from this studio that the mass production of his calotype prints were produced for the publication of "*The Pencil of Nature*," the very first mass-produced book that contained photographs. It is also due to Talbot's presence in the town during this time, that Reading has been blessed with some of the earliest photographs of the built environment in existence. Ultimately, Talbot was unhappy with the studio site in Reading and deemed it to be an unsuccessful location and he left Reading after only a short period.

Amongst the many historical churches and places of worship in the area, a highlight is the Holy Trinity parish church at the intersection of Russell Street on the Oxford Road. In 1826 the clergyman, Reverend George Hulme, purchased the site to build the chapel over the gravel

pits in that location in order to build catacombs. He counted on the high fees twchich Reading's wealthiest citizens would pay to use the church's burial vaults. The catacombs were sealed off in 1858, due largely to the fact that they kept filling with water, but later used during the Second World War as an air raid shelter. (*Oxford Road, Revealing Reading's Hidden History*)



Many of the local terraced streets in the conservation area did not have bathrooms, as bathrooms did not form part of the original design of many of the more working class households and many of the houses were served by communal baths. As a reminder of this life that continued well into the 20c, slipper baths were located to the rear of Jesse Terrace, back of Castle Street, constructed as late as the 1940s or 1950s. The building was recorded as part of an archaeological investigation. It was noted to be T-shaped in plan, constructed of bricks and concrete and strengthened glass skylights. It had a reception room, boiler room and two storage areas on the ground floor and a second storey pump room. The main longitudinal body of the building contained the wash rooms along a central corridor. The baths, later derelict, and attracting vagrants and ASB, were only torn down c. 2003.



The old slipper baths behind Jesse Terrace ,
in demolition, 2003, photo courtesy of Alan

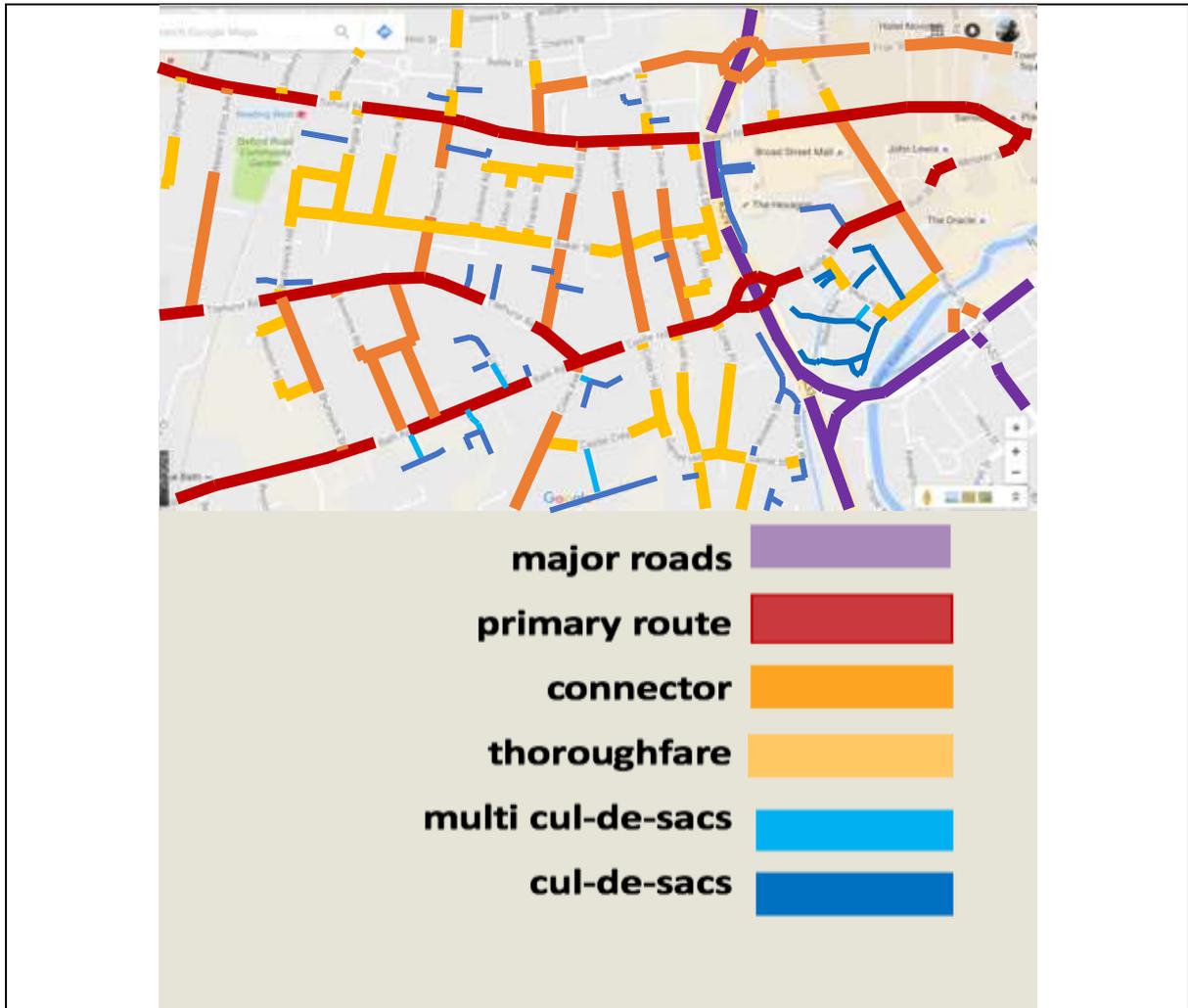
Spatial Analysis

Key positive characteristics

In summation, it is the very element of the conservation area in terms of what it can advise the observer about the infilling and development of its residential streets from earlier market gardening activity, between two major westbound primary routes, that is the key importance of the conservation area.

Whilst there are certainly areas that are well cared for and considered “beautiful” from an historical and architectural viewpoint, the more challenged areas of the conservation area present an ideological problem for some in determining the overall value of the Conservation Area as an area worthy of preservation and enhancement. The current condition of the conservation area which is highly variable from near-derelect to well-restored and maintained properties, do not form a deterrent to the retention and indeed the recommended extension of this conservation area at this time.

Plan form and layout



The Conservation Area comprises the first residential neighbourhood areas to the west of the town centre when crossing the IDR. Whilst prior to the development of the IDR it was more connected to the town, it is now distinctly separated from it, and forms its own distinct neighbourhood area. With the new tall towers of Chatham place, to the north, it lies in an even sharper contrast to the city centre.

The layout of the Conservation Area is very much the result of the **medieval historic roads** headed west from the centre of town, those being the Oxford Road towards Pangbourne and Castle Hill/Castle Street which lead to the Bath Road. Coley Avenue headed south towards the large Coley Manor House and was lined with trees by the turn of the 19c. The Tilehurst Road is an early primary road, although at the turn of the 19c it was still referred to as Pigs Green Lane.

The very earliest north-south connector roads between the two primary routes were Prospect Street which was “founded” by local resident Mr. William Pratt Swallow and went from the Oxford Road south to Pigs Green Lane (Tilehurst Road) and Howard Lane which lead from the Oxford Road to Back Lane leading into town. Russell Street (also “founded” by Mr. Swallow) and Baker Street were laid in 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 hooked up with the earlier layout of the former Back Lane which fed into the street's continuation into town along Hosier Street.

As the infill streets of Waylen Street and Zinzan Street had taken shape c 1830-40, the Oxford Road was referred to as Oxford Street coming out of town, up to the intersection of Russell

Street, and was still noted as such on the 1853 Sanitation Map of Reading. This clarifies the town's influence and implied "relationship" to that portion of the road. As it always has been, the Oxford Road remains to this day, a primary route for Reading out of town to the west, and is still heavily utilised as a conduit out of the town. It has a distinctively different character from the remainder of the Conservation Area.

The residential northern part of the Conservation Area has a defined relationship to the commercial Oxford Road. Local neighbourhood residents rely on the local shops for incidentals, although with Conservation Area's proximity to town, many make use of the town centre for their shopping needs. The Oxford Road sees heavy use during the day with buses, lorries and regular vehicular traffic sometimes creeping to a crawl. There is heavy pedestrian traffic along the route, too, with persons coming in or out of town and or to visit the shops along the road. The energy of the road spills out into the side streets to the south, filling the area with a diverse mix of cultures but also feeding negatively some of the less-desirable problems with crime and anti- social behaviour (ASB) into those streets.

Oxford Road is defined by this busy use and its combination of diverse but largely poorly kept store fronts in both Georgian and Victorian buildings. The north side of the Road, from Eaton Place to the Oxford Road Community School is largely a jumbled mixture of run- down 1960's commercial buildings with remaining listed buildings still dotted in between.

Castle Hill forms the western section of Castle Street as the main road west out of the town centre extending onwards from the parish church of St. Mary's Butts. The entire road was called Castle Street until the part **west of Jesse Terrace** was renamed to Castle Hill sometime between 1870- 1890. Castle Street/Castle Hill remains as it has been historically therefore, a road that is a heavy primary route for traffic in and out of the town centre and to points beyond. The traffic today is further exacerbated by the IDR's exit onto the road at the roundabout between the Conservation Area and the town centre. During rush hours, this road can be clogged by creeping vehicular traffic. Some of this traffic filters onto the Tilehurst Road which can also become heavy with traffic at these hours. To a lesser degree, this road is also a through pedestrian route to residences west of town. It's wide layout with large set- back Georgian villas and trees, still maintains a residential feel, albeit disrupted from the traffic along the route. The Conservation Area streets feeding off this to the south and Jesse Terrace to the north have a symbiosis and bond with the route in terms of character. The streets south of Castle Hill are quieter and do not suffer the same issues as the area to the centre of Castle Hill and the Oxford Road. The southern portion of the Conservation Area is centred around its relationship to Castle Hill/Castle Street as a conduit for residences in and out of that area into town.

There was originally a toll to travel westwards along the Bath Road near the intersection of Castle Hill/Coley Avenue and the Bath Road which was moved westward in the early 1800s. As a heavily used primary route out of town and to the Bath toll road, the structures along Castle Hill are reflective of its early life as such a major route and stopping spots just before the toll, sprang up. The Kings Arm Inn with late 17c-18c origins at 154-160 Castle Hill which is now private housing, the Horse and Jockey Public House at 120 Castle Street (first mentioned in 1699 and rebuilt in 1823) and the 17c Sun Inn on Castle Street near the town centre are some of the few surviving reminders of the businesses that profited from those travelling out of town on their way westward.

In due course, Castle Hill became the street for grand residences. At the turn of the 19c. Thomas Jesse, the progenitor of the famous local Jesse family of developers, occupied the former King's Arms Inn at 154-160 Castle Hill and proceeded to develop other properties along the street. Although it has not been substantiated by historians, it is thought that Thomas Jesse built what is now called the Yeomanry House, and was at various points of the 19c referred to as Castlehill House. Yeomanry House was built circa 1810 as grand Georgian manor house along the road, answering the grandeur of local market gardener, Mr.

Swallow's residence and the Jesse family's home across the street. Large villas sprang up along the Bath Road defining this area as "the location" in Reading for its wealthiest residents.

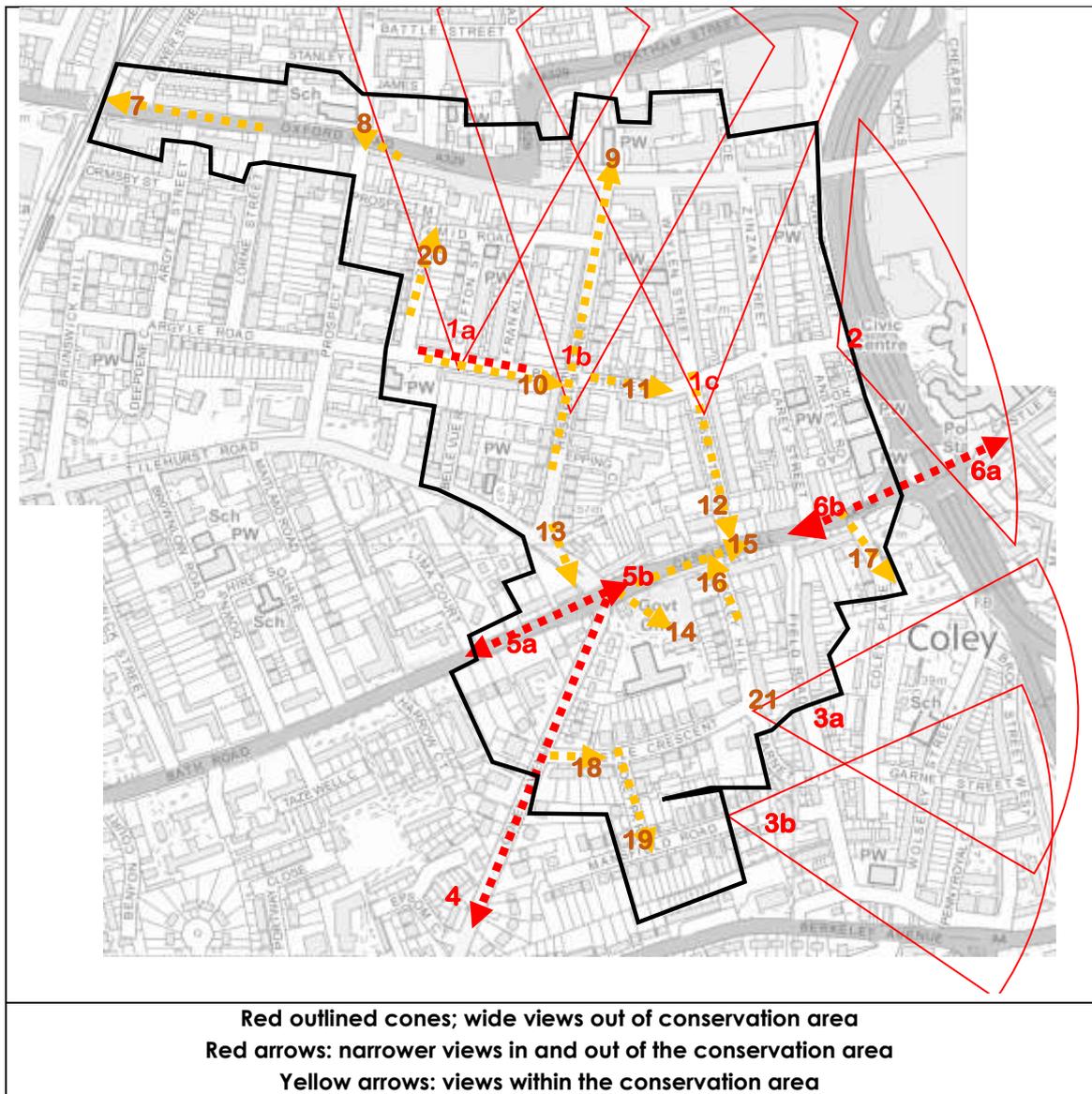
The primary roads of Prospect Street and Russell Street north of Castle Hill were laid in first as thoroughfares from the Oxford Road (Pangbourne Road) through to Tilehurst Road and to the south. Those thoroughfares were laid out by Mr. Swallow, a local businessman and market gardener, whose gardens to the north of Tilehurst and west of Russell Street, he sold off for housing west of Russell Street.

Russell Street forms a wide connector road between Castle Hill and the Oxford Road. It was built directly on the eastern boundary line of Swallow's market gardens. It's wide avenue – like appearance with large Georgian terraced villas on the west side facing later Victorian villas on the east side, clearly bisects the Conservation Area from east to west. The Bath stone villas of 48-50 along with the striking Georgian red brick terraces from nos. 6- 46 carry the grand, if not slightly austere, feeling of the street. The view from the southern "top" of Russell Street looking down the hill north, provides a striking view of the Holy Trinity parish church with the leafy green hillsides of the Caversham escarpment beyond. The buildings along Russell Street, whilst striking, vary in their standards of maintenance which detracts from the overall appearance of the road. Maintenance is especially poor towards the Oxford Road end of the street. A number of the terraced Georgians between Baker Street and the Goldsmid Road junction have suffered with the installations of illegal windows which detract greatly from the overall appearance.

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 2- 3 story residential properties built largely from the 1830s- 1840s onwards to the latter part of the 1800s. With the exception of Jesse Terrace, the streets are in overall poor condition and this detracts greatly from what is otherwise an historical area with many fine larger houses. The lack of trees, overhead wires, and stripped front gardens given over to rubbish bins, paint an overall bleak picture in the area.

It is Jesse Terrace, with two Article 4 protections, that forms the most strikingly attractive single street within the Conservation Area. Gardens are well tended, and façades are well maintained within the street.

Views and Vistas



The views within and out of this conservation area are largely limited to urban views and more enclosed street views as a result of its built up urban landscape. There are views largely channelled along streets, to landmarks themselves or along grouped frontages. There are several significant views out of the conservation area. Whilst a “ fine view” is often considered as one involving greenery or trees; green views are often scarce in this urban conservation area and thus, many of the best views are of townscape composition focussing on the built environment.

Appreciable views along area streets occasionally show the development of the area and can emphasize the importance of the street pattern layout in the area. Long gone are several early views that made up the early 18c views from the area. However, it is important to note those views that may have changed little over the centuries and to acknowledge them. The early views south from Georgian period houses built on the north side of Castle Hill/Castle Street that looked out over nurseries, bleaching grounds and old civil War fortifications in the areas of Castle Crescent, Coley Hill and Field Road are long gone, but we

can imagine this from the Coates' 1802 map. Also gone are the early views from the Georgian terraces set originally on the west side of Russell Street to take advantage of the "salubrious air" and the views out over the market gardens of Mrs. Zinzan's fields to the town centre of Reading further east.

Views into the Conservation Area

The two most striking views looking into the conservation area are views from the east and west entrance into Castle Street/Castle Hill.

The view entering the area from town across the IDR, sends the eye immediately into the winding curve of Castle Street and up the gently sloping rise along the top of the chalk and clay escarpment. Large Georgians line both sides of the street, and draw the viewer deeper into the area.

Similarly, the view from the intersection of Castle Hill/Coley Avenue/ and Russell Street draw the viewer across the intersection into one of the most attractive areas of the conservation area, outside the Kings Arms Inn.

Wide- sweeping views out of the area

The views looking north towards the low lying River Thames which takes in the leafy green chalk escarpment and hills of Caversham are some of the most appreciated views from this area (1a, 1b and 1c). The best vantage points for these views are from Jesse Terrace, Russell Street and along Baker Street looking down Clifton and Franklin Streets. As a cautionary tale, similar views were lost from the streets in the Conservation Area furthest east with the building of the high rises of Chatham Place. These views give the area a sense of relation to Caversham and is often the only glimpse of green from some of the area's streets. The view is of historical note, and it is anticipated that the terrace of 61-79 Baker Street had the finest advantage of this view when they were built.

The wide – sweeping view out to the south and east from the end of Coley Hill and Castle Crescent (nos. 3a, 3b) encompasses a fine and important view out over the river beds of the Holybrook and the River Kennet towards London Street and the Katesgrove area of Reading with the spires of the mediaeval St. Giles Church and Christ Church (c 1862) highlighting the view. The view is one that has changed over the years, but the vantage point has remained and as such it makes for one of the finest and most well- loved open views out of the area. The view is worthy of protection under an historical view policy.

A more modern, but well- noted view, (no. 2) and one that has become very popular since the building of the IDR, is the view from the very historical corner of Baker Street and Howard Street, once the corner of an unnamed connector road (Howard Street) from the Oxford Road to Back Lane (the eastern part of Baker Street) . At one point, this intersection was merely a continuation into town along Hosier Street, which before its demolition, still had the remains of older mediaeval buildings along it. After the 2016 demolition of the former Council Offices and until something else were to be built, the viewer can enjoy a fine vista straight to the spire of the medieval parish church at St. Mary's Butts. It could be hoped that whatever is built in this open space in the future might preserve something of this view, so that the association from the neighbourhood to town centre remains.

Narrow but significant views out of the area

The view along Coley Avenue (no. 4) to the south, out of the Conservation Area is an historic view worthy of note and retention by way of policy to secure it. The trees along the route have been in situ since at least the turn of the 19c (Coates, 1802) and probably from much earlier in the 18c, and once formed the private pathway to Coley Park Manor which was rebuilt in the mid 19c. With the tall red brick walls (more dominant at the northern end of the road along the western edge, the avenue affords a pleasant walk or drive despite its often moderately heavy traffic.



Talbot's photograph of the allée of trees along Coley Avenue

Looking west along the Bath Road from the intersection of Castle Hill with Russell Street, Coley Avenue and the Bath Road, (no. 5a) affords the viewer a leafy view of tall mature trees, many of which enjoy TPO status. Within the Conservation Area from this intersection looking west are over 20 trees with TPOs just along the 175 m distance from the intersection to the end of the conservation area, an area comprising of the largest collection of fine mature trees in the Conservation Area.



West view along the bath Road from the intersection with Castle Hill, Coley Avenue to the left, and Russell Street to the right

The view along Castle Hill and down to Castle Street (no. 6a) affords the viewer a wide avenue view, with fairly good green coverage and many large attractive houses in over- all relatively good condition. The gentle undulation and the fall towards town makes for a pleasant slightly winding view into town across the IDR where-in the former correlation and tie this street once had directly into the historical town centre can still be understood and enjoyed.



The view up Castle Street to Castle Hill, courtesy of Joe Doak

Views within the Conservation Area

Often times the views within the conservation area, are enjoyed laterally as well as straight ahead, taking in the streetscape as it unfolds.

The view along the Oxford Road from the school towards the Railway bridge (no. 7), can be a busy one with much pedestrian in particular traffic, however it is always a vibrant and exciting view. The reminder of the railway and its significance to Reading is constantly in front of the viewer as one heads west. A current view of the bridge with its faded doves painted along it is likely to change with expected upgrades to the Reading West Station. The iron bridge is not original, and replaced the original brick bridge that took the first trains across it in 1840s. It is an historical view, however, and the liveliness of the street in its current permutation is little changed since the 1950s when west Reading became the hotspot for new immigrants to the town.

The view of the Oxford Road Community School (no. 8) is striking, especially in contrast to the sometimes raucous atmosphere along the Oxford Road. The red brick of the school is brilliant in the late afternoon sun with children streaming out its front doors and is best enjoyed looking West from the Prospect Street intersection, avoiding the visual intrusions of the modern petrol station and the Tesco's Express.

The view down Russell Street (no. 9) which takes in the large Georgian terraces to the west and the large late Victorian villas to the right resting on Holy Trinity parish church at the bottom of the slope is a well-known view to most persons from Reading and one that is also exemplary of both good Victorian urban planning and a stroke of geological luck. The church is in the location it is, not only to afford a nice view to the church itself, but also because the church chose to build there in 1826 to use the gravel pit that was there which had previously supplied much of the gravel along the Oxford Road. It is a striking view and it is still possible to gain an understanding of the parish church's important relationship to its local neighbourhood community at that time. It is also in noting the difference in the Georgian houses to the west side of that street and the later Victorian villas to the east side of the street that a sense for how the neighbourhood developed is understood.

The view north along Goldsmid Road of the large TPO'd oak tree at the bend of the road, (no. 20) sets off what is otherwise a rather historically unremarkable, but quietly charming corner with mid-century small terraced homes nestled along the west side of the street.

The view walking 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 to the view of the back of 36 Russell Street on the right - a house originally built as a two-story single family detached Georgian structure, not dissimilar to the two story detached Georgian opposite it at 41 Russell Street that is the oldest house (prior to 1833) on the east side of Russell Street.

Crossing Russell Street and heading east towards the historical bend in Baker Street (no. 11), the view continues to unwind and is set off by the long imposing 3 story Georgian stuccoed terrace on the south side of the street (c 1820-30s). The former studio of Henry Fox Talbot is at no. 55 in this terrace at the west end. The charming cottage-like detached 2 story house at no. 14 Baker Street and the two imposing, listed semi-detached houses at 33- 39 form a pretty picture with no.1 Jesse Terrace and its noted high brick curtilage wall beyond. The walk provides a charming residential view, despite the streets somewhat shabby appearance that is little changed from Talbot's day.

The view up Jesse Terrace (no. 12) with the neat symmetry of matching terraced houses on either side with their sloping roofed verandas and imposing size behind set-back gardens provides a rare glimpse of green in the area. It provides a restful space for the eye in the large green void that makes up the majority of the surrounding streets. It is especially attractive because of the well-kept nature of the houses which sit in sharp contrast to the

neighbouring Waylen Street to the north which has an extremely run-down appearance. The minimal amount of over-head wires also provides a pleasant view of the sky and the back of Heritage Court, in good condition, forms an imposing, but austere view of the back of Castle Hill.

The view to the back of Henry Pratt Swallow's residence at 2 Bath Road (no. 13) is a striking one within the conservation area but an equally easily missed view as the traffic there limits the desire or chance to linger comfortably at the view. The many and tall chimney spires of Swallow's residence and 4 Bath Road next door form a grand, charmingly austere view not often seen in such an urban setting.



The chimney view at the back of Swallow's residence (2 Bath Road) and 4 Bath Road

The view from Coley Avenue into the area of the Yeomanry House (no. 14) features its former charming small gatehouse at the intersection and the path beyond sweeping back the manor house itself. The path to the front door of Yeomanry House is in situ from the original layout of the property and the viewer can still sense the way visitors were directed to arrive at the house. It is also possible to note the relationship that the house was to have within that intersection where other prominent houses for Reading's wealthiest citizens developed in the early decades of the 19c. The reduced front garden as it is laid out currently, gives a sense of what the front garden may have been like for the house in its relationship to Castle Hill. Currently it is regrettable that the house is not easily visible to Castle Hill, as that view was originally laid out when the house was built and the gardens were laid out. The modern Berkshire Record Office there on the property is situated on the site of the house's former stables, and whilst modern, has good massing set to the rear of the property out of the direct view of the manor house itself. The predominant use of glass at the front entrance affords it a comfortable relationship and reduced sense of prominence within the rest of the site. The view on into the open garden in front, is perhaps the quietest and most peaceful in the entire conservation area, with the overgrown brush and large trees currently forming a welcome barrier between the house and Castle Hill.

The view from the top of Castle Hill looking east towards the Town (no. 15) is an open view little changed from paintings of 200 years ago. Disregarding the unfortunate intrusion of the

modern building of flats on the south side of the street at Coley Hill, the view encompassing the former Kings Arm Inn courtyard and its stunning TPO'd cypress tree at its centre, looming over the entire courtyard throwing the entire ancient structure into shade is one of Reading's best loved historical views. As the viewer winds down the street towards town, the Jesse development at Heritage Court on the north and the perfectly "irregular" mix of the Georgian terraced homes at 113-121 Castle Street form a classic Georgian scene. The traffic whilst consistently busy, does not entirely ruin the otherwise perfect setting.



Early 19c view of Castle Hill towards town



**Blended view of Castle Hill and Castle Street:
early 20c with tram line overhead to today's view with the Blade in the far distance**

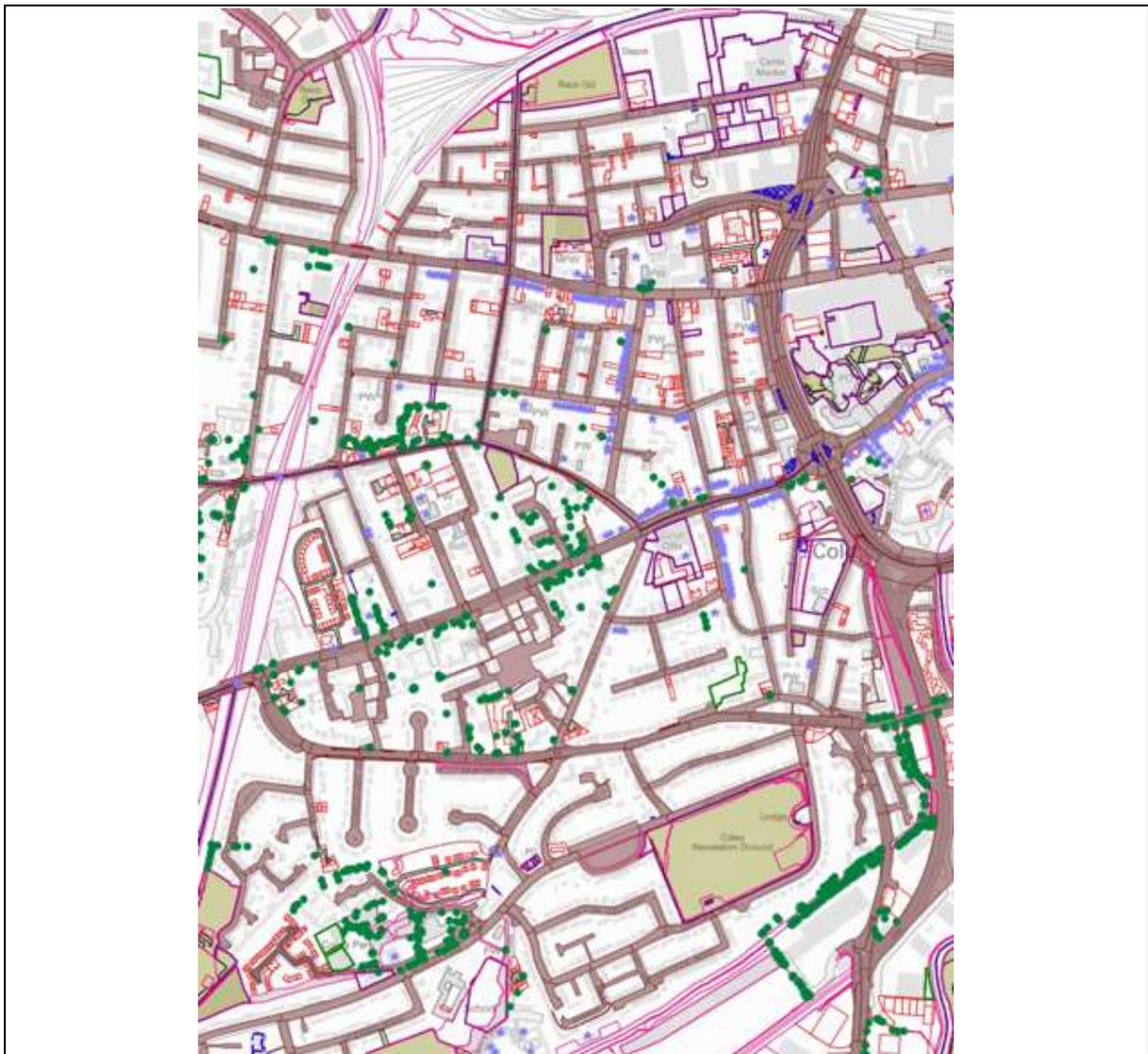
Looking down onto Castle Hill from Coley Hill, (no. 16) the viewer from the Georgian side street looks onto the larger Georgian road of Castle Hill, getting an increasingly open and historic view in front that is unique for the area. With the imposing Jesse family built Heritage

Court and its large TPO'd trees in front to the north, the view becomes increasingly picturesque.

The view up the slight rise to the tall slivered stand of three terraced houses on Coley Place (no.17) set against the green trees behind them, beyond the Bath stone terraces of 99-105 Castle Street, give a strong sense of the demolished older neighbourhood that once existed beyond the rise there above the river bed beneath it.

There are many lovely vantage points in the Castle Crescent character area and two views are of particular note. The view from Coley Avenue into the street of Castle Crescent (no. 18), with the curve in the road affords the viewer with a continuing unfolding scene of large Victorian villas down the street. Similarly, the view from Castle Crescent down Coley Park Road and towards the villas of Mansfield Road (no. 19) continues to draw the viewer deeper into the area to find even more grand houses and villas.

Trees and green landscape Biodiversity



Map from RBC-
(to be replaced with scale- readable map) green dots denote TPOs -missing back of 29 Russell)

The area is primarily made up of urban streetscapes. Trees and plantings figure prominently in certain sections of the conservation area, but most of the conservation area is considered by Reading Borough Council to be an area with 10% or less canopy cover and therefore, the strategy to protect and enhance green provision in the area is very high as defined in the Council's 2010 tree strategy document.

It is encouraging to note that the local Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association (BSANA) and the Council have been working together proactively in seeking out sites to increase green provision for the area. This strategy has been successful in various locations notably along Baker Street and along the Oxford Road in recent years. Regrettably, due to underground wires and cables, the planting of trees along other streets, especially streets with narrow pavements, seems to remain an issue that the Council does not have an answer for. This is unfortunate, as green provision along streets such as Zinzan Street, Carey Street, Waylen Street, Franklin Street, Clifton Street and Russell Street is clearly warranted. Additionally, the neighbourhood association has been proactive in working with the Council in the halting the egregious removal of trees that contribute positively to the urban landscape and attractiveness of the area.

TPO trees in the area

The map outlines the properties where trees are protected by the Council's Tree Protection Orders (TPO) and also significant street or public domain trees. Not having a TPO, does not mean a tree in the conservation area is not worthy of such a protection. The system of placing a TPO on a tree currently is often a reactionary measure as opposed to a proactive measure due to the constraints on Council staffing. If a tree is in the public domain, or owned and managed by the Council, there is no TPO placed on the tree, as they are 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 highest level of note to residents in the area are:

- the huge cypress at 154- 160 Castle Hill- possibly up to 200 years of age
- the appx 100-year-old Oak tree at the corner of Goldsmid Road framing the turn of the road
- 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 quite refuge (despite the surrounding traffic for that area.)



The large cypress at 154- 160 Castle Hill and other TPO trees along the street



Large TPO trees along the Bath Road

Trees and green on private properties

Many of the trees which do benefit the area sit on private properties. The most notable green canopy in the conservation area are those areas along the Bath Road, and those along Castle Hill.

Additionally, there are several trees being identified for TPOs at this time on the front of the property at Yeomanry House site, as the Council is currently in the process of liquidating that property.

The back gardens of many of the terraced houses have many smaller trees, that contribute to the green space in the area, but do nothing for the barren streetscapes largely devoid of trees.

Trees and green in the public domain

There are a number of trees within the public domain that contribute strongly to the overall green canopy cover and green space within the area. Trees within the public domain that positively affect the conservation area are largely in the southern region of the conservation area and dominate Coley Avenue, the Bath Road with some trees along Castle Hill. The allée of trees along Howard Street form an essential barrier to the IDR noise and traffic for the area along Howard Street and Body Road. The raised planters along Body Road with trees are sadly in poor shape and contribute to a high level of ASB in that location. It would be hoped that improvements to that area could be made to benefit it for greater public use and enjoyment. Additionally, whilst providing a nice sense of green at the corner of the IDR intersection with Castle Street at the southeast corner of the conservation area, the trees owned in the public domain in that area are suffering from neglect and also invite drug usage behind the trees.

The historical allée of trees along Coley Avenue is a very important contributor to an overall green atmosphere of the area to the south of the intersection with Castle Hill, Russell Street and the Bath Road. The substantial mature canopy at the beginning of the Bath Road gives a grand feel and look to the view down the Bath Road, and a very nice sense of green, despite the road being frequently busy.

The newer trees planted by the Council along the Oxford Road, are hoped, as the trees mature, to bring about a much greener feel to the Road as are the newer plantings along Baker Street.



Allée of trees along Coley Avenue looking north into the Conservation Area

Green parks and open green spaces

There are no public parks or gardens within the conservation area excepting the front garden of Yeomanry House. This land was noted in the appraisal in 2004, also, and as historically noted, it forms an essential and critical green space for the public. As the Council has announced the disbursement of the site, the retention of the front garden for some continued and possibly greater measure of public use would be key. The parkland area is important not only in terms of its historical significance to the area, but also because it is rare and thus precious green space in a densely populated residential area.



Only a few other areas of public green space lie at the intersection of the IDR with Castle Street, and the stands of planters with poorly tended trees at Body Road represent the only other areas of public green space in the neighbourhood that could see creative reuse. It could be hoped that creative redevelopment of the area near Body Road could create

even a small area of green space beneficial to the greater neighbourhood instead of being an area for frequent ASB.

Open green spaces that are private are equally rare, and those are owned by local churches. The patch of green grass and shrubbery at the Carey Centre near Body Road provide an essential spark of green for the immediate area, despite the fact it remains in private use for the Carey Baptist Church.

Additionally, the expansive green garden space at the National Spiritualist Church at 81 Baker Street, is an historical garden tied to the former York Lodge house where in the Church makes its home. It lends a pleasant view of green along Baker Street. It too is for the private use of the Church.

It should also be noted that the extensive green garden spaces at the terrace of 134- 144 Castle Hill with the deep-set gardens along Jesse Terrace contribute greatly to what feel there is of green in the area.

Buildings and Public Realm

Key Positive Characteristics of the Built environment

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.

A brief and general re- cap of some of the area's most exemplary and typical styles follow.

Building types and forms

The large Georgian villas along Castle Street and Castle Hill, are exemplary of the initial development out of Reading in the 18c although little of this exists visually today.

The classic Georgian terraces along Castle Hill, Russell Street, Oxford Road, and along Baker Street, are of red brick and stuccoed fronts. Differing styles of Georgian properties can be found throughout the area.

Yeomanry House provides an idea of the styling of the large houses with surrounding gardens that catered to Reading's wealthiest citizens at the onset of the 19c. Yeomanry house is a two story, stuccoed front manor house with a central door and windows that were placed in classic Georgian style. Sadly, the building is much altered, with arched windows on the ground floor which have been filled into accommodate a smaller fenestration. On the right hand side, a later Victorian addition destroys the symmetry of the front of the property as it would have originally appeared. However, the columned balustrade and the double curved front bays can give the observer an idea of the former grandeur of the property in its original layout.

The derelict manor house at 3 Castle Crescent which currently until it is developed, offers another view of former detached residences in private gardens that exist in the area. The only other property with this sort of make-up extant is the National Spiritualist Church on Baker Street with its garden in front of its entrance to the east.

	
<p>Yeomanry House and its altered façade with filled in Georgian arch windows and its later Victorian extension to the right</p>	<p>3 Castle Crescent – dilapidated late Georgian manor house with quoins and porticoed front entrance porch.</p>

Stuccoed fronts are most common along Castle Street and Castle Hill, on some of the earliest properties in the area built for wealthy businessmen. Along the street, there are examples of detached and terraced properties. Many of the terraced properties are 2 to 3 stories occasionally with an undercroft/ basement. Details such as elaborate fanlights above doors, panelled doors frequently in inset arched entrances, quoins, and arched windows sometimes with corniced detailing are common. Windows are frequently sash windows or arched glazing and a great number of original windows survive in these houses from this time period.

Less common are the more elaborate details such as at 107 Castle Street, with contrast an ionic column pilastered front decoration or porticoed porches such as at 104 Oxford Road or at the later 3 Castle Crescent. Frequently, rooflines are parapet style with cornice mouldings finishing the roof line off in contrast. Less frequently, wrought iron window balconies with regency style designs embellish fronts.

Numerous properties have rusticated and channelled ground floors meant to convey the strength and substantial grounding of a grand property for an important person. Stuccoed front Georgians also appear along the terraced strand of greatly altered Georgians along the south side of Baker Street between Russell Street and Jesse Terrace (no. 41- 55 Baker Street) and the terraced stand of 3 story Georgians on the Oxford Road at 195-203.

	
<p>107-109 Castle Street with long staircases going to the ground floor, rosette detailing above</p>	<p>122 Castle Street with rusticated ground floor, side mock- quoin pilasters , regency detailed</p>

stable entrance, rusticated ground floor and ionic pilasters	emblem, fanlight and corniced windows with typical reduced height top floor
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The unusual Bath-stone coloured stucco fronts of 134- 144 Castle Hill with its long front gardens and its regency style oval windows



Plethora of details at 132- 124 Castle Street: a triangular pediment above a formerly joined dwelling, rusticated ground floors, detailed fanlights, basement/undercrofts, cornice mouldings and traditional window placements



Red brick frontage Georgian terraces are more common along the west side of Russell Street, the terrace to the west of Russell Street on Baker Street, the terrace along the Oxford Road between Lorne Street and Argyle Street and long terrace along Coley Hill. Whilst there

are some three-story properties with basements, two story properties are common. Fanlights over the doors, arched windows, contrasting wide banded first floor courses are common on these properties.

There are numerous houses with stuccoed ground floors and red brick floors above. The terrace at 31-35 are fine examples with later added Victorian detailed window decorations.

Of particular note to the Conservation Area , are a small collection of more humble Georgian style housing at nos 1-9 Prospect Street. This collection is a charming group of a humble two story Georgian properties for the more common working man in the first decades of the 19th century. They sit in sharp contrast to the grander Georgians in the area which were built for Reading's wealthiest businessmen. Sadly, the Prospect Street properties have been greatly maligned over the years and only no 9 contains the original sash windows and fanlight of the property.



Baker Street terrace c 1820s



1-9 Prospect Street, humble working man Georgians



Terrace on the Oxford Road west side, north of Baker Street



Georgians on Russell Street with wrought iron window balconies



Greatly maligned Georgian terrace south side of Oxford Road

Detached Georgian residence, Oxford Road

Bath stone made a limited appearance in the conservation area at 48–50 Russell Street and at the striking Blenheim Terrace at 97-105 Castle Street. Far greater examples of the use of Bath stone exist to the east of the centre of town, notably in the Eldon Square Conservation Area. The semi-detached villa at 48-50 Russell Street is the only one of its kind in this conservation area but in the Eldon Square Conservation Area, there are many near duplicates of this property. Bath stone was believed to have been imported along the Kennet Canal into town and was a material used in Reading for its prestige value.



Blenheim Terrace, Castle Street



48-50 Russell Street

The late 1830s-1850s saw the building of the more scaled back and humble Victorian terraced housing as along Waylen Street, Zinzan Street and Howard Street. Most of these houses are three-storey with the basement properties, but the scale of the homes and their interior rooms are more diminutive in size than their earlier Georgian counterparts. Sadly, these are some of the most maligned properties in the conservation area, but originally all would have boasted of sash windows and panel door fronts under simple squared-off fanlight/transom windows above. Chimneys and chimney pots largely remain but have also seen removal in recent years. Virtually no original windows remain on any of the streets and more modern build square, simple dormers have been added to rooflines to increase the living space inside most of these properties that are detrimental to the properties' appearances. The vast majority of the properties were originally red brick fronts. Today many of them are painted over and the striking appearance of red bricked terraces has been sadly lost. Frontages onto the pavement of these properties which are original are rarely found in the area today with no. 16-26 Howard Street providing the best original fronts, which consisted low stone or brick walls with wrought iron railings.



Waylen Street terraced housing c 1840



Howard Street terraced housing with original railings on pavement frontages



Alexandra Terrace, Baker Street no. 23- 31



14 Baker Street, a rare detached "cottage" style Victorian residence

The very attractive houses of Jesse Terrace were the vision of the local Jesse family, and were started c. 1850, built in groups of four or so at a time. These were a grander sized house than the slightly earlier homes to the streets north and the charming veranda front porches with their concave metal roofs provide the range with a unifying detail that sets the street apart. The houses front gardens, with their Victorian tile front pathways are well taken care of and within Reading, they remain a rather unique example of a unified Victorian street built for the wealthier businessman.



Jesse Terrace, looking south towards Castle Hill

From the 1870s to the turn of the 20th century, the remainder of the area was filled with housing. This time period saw two primary types of houses being built. The grand red brick and polychrome detached and semi-detached villas of Castle Crescent and Mansfield Road and along the east side of Russell Street north of Baker Street are notable for their detailing and their large massing. Whilst red brick remained a dominant colour, other colours of brick such as grey, tan and white were employed as contrast detailing and occasionally used for the entirety of the property's façade. On some of the properties, terracotta details were introduced around windows and doors to embellish the house front. Many of these houses are three-storey properties with expansive footprints. Some have side door entrances.



The Parsonage, 34 Russell Street



Polychrome houses along Castle Crescent



Polychrome detailing on large properties, east side of Russell Street



22 Mansfield Road, with stone detailing and Victorian roof tile work



Detailing along houses of Castle Crescent, roofline terracotta trim

Concurrently, more humble polychromed and terraced two- up, two- down houses went in along Clifton Street and Franklin Street, Belle Vue Terrace and along the east side of Field Road. Further along the Oxford Road near the railway bridge where the retail area had fallen off has a high preponderance of this type of polychrome styling, on both house fronts and on retail properties. Many of these terraces used the effects of several colours of brick to create eye-catching patterns running along the first floor level that would follow the entire route of the terrace. Sadly, over-painting of some of these houses destroys the beauty of this unifying look. Frequent use of bay frontages are common in the terraces.



Franklin Street



Field Road



Clifton Street polychrome with pointed bay window roof lines with terracotta points



Polychrome first floors of north side shops, Oxford Road



Polychrome housing next to c 1900 Bridge Hall, Oxford Road



Exuberant rooflines above badly maligned ground floors, Oxford Road



3-9 Baker Street polychrome



4-6 semi detached, Baker Street

Houses of worship, were common in the area early on and many survive today, with the only parish church being the ashlar stone Holy Trinity parish church along the Oxford Road. Other churches were all built by nonconformist religions. The Carey Baptist church built in 1869, is a polychrome façade that exemplifies the types of more creative expression used on some of these buildings. The listed synagogue at the corner of Goldsmith Road and Clifton Street is a unique expression of design built in 1900, with Moorish detailing and an exuberant use of brickwork, stone and terracotta. It's belltower capped in lead is a charming embellishment.



Providence Chapel, Oxford Road



Carey Baptist Church, Carey Street, Wikipedia



Reading Synagogue, Goldsmid Road, (get reading)



Holy Trinity, Oxford Road c. 1830s

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Public buildings, asides from the retail fronts built up along the Oxford Road are rarer, but the Oxford Road Community School (c. 1880-90s) is a fine example of late Victorian public building styling during that time period.

The Pavilion at the corner of the Oxford Road and Russell Street, is an imposing former cinema, which opened in 1929 and is now well restored internally and externally by the Lifespring Church.



Oxford Road Community School

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The Pavilion, Lifespring Church, Oxford Road

Modern buildings from the 20c have filled in most remaining areas and little in the way of brownfield sites within the conservation area remains any longer. Some older buildings have been famously lost to new development over the years- notably the Methodist Church at the corner of Waylen Avenue and the Oxford Road.



The former Methodist Church, Waylen Street, being dismantled

Of the modern buildings in the area worthiest of retention, the Berkeley Court flats on Coley Avenue is commendable mid 20c design. Additionally, the Berkshire Record Office on the Yeomanry House site, is commendable for its massing and subtlety within the landscape setting for the its formidably sized footprint largely because of its glass fronted façade looking out onto the setting .



Materials, Styles and Features

The earliest buildings along Castle Street/ Castle Hill are built of brick and stone and rendered in stucco. However, red brick is the undeniable material of choice not only for the buildings of this conservation area but throughout Reading, a town famous for its brick and the various permutations that developed from the craft of brickmaking. In the conservation area, brick from the Georgian period on through Victorian and Edwardian development can be found in abundance within the built environment.

Brick chimneys and terracotta chimney pots are largely still in place although perhaps not used very frequently. The retention of these should also be a priority within the area. Terracotta moulded embellishments and later placarded decorations are seen occasionally on buildings c1890- 1910 and are likely of local make. These should be retained. The Victorian period terracotta roof tiles are predominantly found along Mansfield Road although example of clay roof tiles on the mansard roof front at 160 Castle Hill is notable and was probably added in the latter half of the 19c to keep pace with the newer villas in the Castle Crescent/Mansfield Road area.

There was a minor use of Bath stone on several properties in the area, and Bath stone , even occasionally Portland stone, was used later on to embellish properties and to show wealth. Only two properties in the area are built of local ashlar stone, those being the Holy Trinity Church on the Oxford Road and its neighbour slightly to the rear, the Carlisle House at 118 Oxford Road, likely the work of famous local architect John Billing.

In the last half of the 19c, a greater variety of colour of brick colours were used throughout the area. Possibly the earliest example of a variation in brick colour use can be found on the gatehouse of the Yeomanry House at 133 Castle Hill, c. 1840s, where in a very flagrant use, the front and side façades of the building that face the street are of a pinky salmon shade, obviously placed as such to show the wealth and good taste of the owner of the property at that time.



The former Yeomanry House gatehouse, c. 1840s, with unusual salmon coloured stone covering the main front and side elevations with well detailed wooden Victorian embellishment on its street facing eaves (before its 2016 renovation)

In the latter half of the 19c, grey, tan and cream or white coloured bricks were used in polychrome styling to embellish the villas and smaller College like terraced housing that filled in the area West of Russell Street, Oxford Road area west of prospect Street, and in the Castle Crescent/ Mansfield Road areas most notably.

Carved wood embellishments were popular on some of the later Victorian properties, many following pattern books to create unity lan terraces or to create a more stand-up affect on a later Victorian villa. The very prominent position of the Yeomanry House gatehouse displays finely carved embellishments of the eaves, likely put on the property in the 1870s to prepare it for the property's sale in 1880, the parsonage at 34 Russell Street also makes good use of word embellishment on its porch facing Baker Street.

Roofing materials in the area are almost predominantly Welsh slate. Sadly, many roofs in the area have been recovered in inexpensive substitutes, the newer versions, often shiny, truly destroying the subtlety of the original slate roof appearance in the area.

Lead roofing is used only very intermittent lay in the area, again found on the roof at 160 Castle Hill and on the Synagogue's bell tower, most notably.

Original guttering was of cast-iron on Georgian, then later on wealthier Victorian homes. Whilst a certain amount of original guttering remains, egregious black plastic substitutes abound throughout the area.

Cast iron railings, once common throughout the area, are fairly rare in the area. Most of the original railings were removed during World War II, for the development of munitions. Sadly, most of the melted iron railings were never used for that purpose. Occasional iron railings do still exist in the area and should be retained. Inexpensive modern substitutes are fairly common in the area and whilst far from ideal, are preferable to nothing at all.

Buildings of Local Historical Interest and Positive Buildings

Listed buildings

The listed buildings in the conservation area are concentrated in Castle Street, Castle Hill, Coley Hill, Russell Street, Baker Street, and along and near to the Oxford Road. With few exceptions, the majority of the listed buildings in the Conservation Area date *from the later part of the 18c to the early 20c*. With one exception, that being the former King's Arms Inn at 154-160 Castle Hill which is grade II* listed, all other listed properties in the area are grade II. Of the listed properties in the conservation area, all but the Synagogue on Goldsmid Road, the Holy Trinity parish church, and the Oxford Road Community School on the north side of the Oxford Road, were built as houses. The earlier and more prestigious properties were situated along Castle Street/Castle Hill.

The sole grade II* listed building in the area is nos. 154-160 Castle Hill, which once formed one building – the King's Arms Inn. Although the external details are largely from the late 18 to early 19 c, the building is probably earlier and certainly existed *in a more truncated form well before 1734 (cite earliest records here)*. Its life as an Inn was in response to the heavy use of the Bath Road as a major route to the west from London. Other Inns and public houses along Castle Street also existed because of this factor. In 1784, it had developed to its present form, and was used to accommodate 200 exiled French priests during the French Revolution. An early engraving shows the garden laid out in the main courtyard, with George III spelt out with plants to honour the King that rescued them. It is listed grade II*, partly because of its very good internal features including a fine staircase and panelled room in no. 158. The west wing has recently been sympathetically restored to good effect. The remarkable and locally well-loved cypress out front benefits from a Tree Protection Order (TPO) and may have been planted as a small tree by the French priests in their garden scheme at the time.



The grade II listed Yeomanry House (c 1800) at 131 Castle Hill, named for its use by the Berkshire Yeomanry Squadron during the First World War, and its expansive gardens to Castle Hill is highly important in maintaining a visual understanding of the cluster of prominent large homes at the top of Castle Hill near the Coley Avenue intersection for some of Reading's most important residents.

By 1802 the Jesse family resided at the former King's Arms Inn on the north side of the Castle Hill opposite and the Swallow family (of local market gardening prominence) at the northwest corner of the intersection. The entrance drive to Yeomanry House from the just off the Castle Hill/ Coley Avenue intersection exists in precisely the same footprint as it has since

the building of its gatehouse in situ at the corner circa 1840. Its purpose was to allow a glancing view at the fine grand house at the end. Other grand villas had sprung up by the early 1830's to house other prominent Reading families in the immediate vicinity of the intersection spreading down the Bath Road. Regrettably, the majority of the houses of that time have been demolished or only remain in a later form: Bath House at no.1 at the southwest corner of that intersection.

The houses along Castle Hill employ the use of Bath stone, stucco and red brick, the majority of which are topped with slate roofs. The street has a dominant Georgian feel to the street from the collection of fine large houses. The early 19c Bath stone terrace from 97- 105 is attractive and generally well-maintained, with the exception of 105 in a poor state of repair, and represents one of only two major uses of Bath stone in the conservation area.

Nos. 107, 109 and possibly 111 date to c.1800 with rusticated stucco façades. 107 Castle Street is an especially interesting villa with four Ionic pilasters to the front elevation, supporting a moulded entablature. Its substantial large rear garden remains intact along with the original stable house and front carriage entrance side house. The house also is noted for its striking central staircase and a roof space wherein there is evidence of use of the early calotype photography invented by Henry Fox Talbot. At 113-121 Castle Street, the houses form a classically diverse collection of houses, charming for their authenticity, each unique in design to the next.

On north side of the road, no. 122 to 130 date prior to 1833 (Dormer map) and have stuccoed façades many with recessed fanlight doorways and original sash windows, with 122 (Culham House) and 126 possessing rusticated ground floor façades and good quality door cases. Another noteworthy group are nos. 134-144 Castle Street, built prior to 1853 which form a fine symmetrical terrace of 6 three storey houses set well back of large front facing gardens. The houses are stucco rendered in a striking Bath stone colour with four very attractive Regency style oval windows towards the top of the terrace.

Nos. 144a-152 (Heritage Court) date from the first half of the 19th century with French windows to the ground floor, facing the front and was built by the Jesse family. At one point , the property housed a nunnery(*dates/photo*). Nos. 162a, 162-166 date to c.1840 and have attractive verandas with concave metal roofs and cast iron balconies decorated with a typical Regency honeysuckle pattern also built by the Jesse family.

The east side of Coley Hill provides has a fine run of well detailed, **c. 1830-1850c** late Georgian houses, a combination of red brick and stucco with prominent cill bands, the larger houses towards the end near the intersection Castle Crescent have vermiculated keystones and later Victorian scalloping above their windows. 3 Castle Crescent (no. 3) c 1840s is currently in an " at risk " condition but still set within its original garden with its original carriage way and awaiting renovation and the addition of buildings to the site for housing. 29-31 Castle Crescent along with 35 Coley Avenue were built after 1853 and comprise a large corner unit of houses faced in stucco with gabled end breaks .

61-79 Baker Street is a particularly fine early long terrace which pre- dates 1833 (documented to c mid-1820) and is built of red brick. All houses are of 2 storeys plus basement with sash windows, slate roofs and radiating fanlights. 69 Baker has reinstated the front iron fence railings from the original design. The National Spiritualist Church, originally known as York Lodge, is the only one of three former villas left on Baker Street to the west of the terrace at 61-79 called York Lodge, Lancaster Lodge and Tudor Lodge respectively. These houses were built c.1820s ,roughly the same time as the terrace. York Lodge survives in its original garden and it's front door faces away from Baker Street and towards its original garden space to the east, giving representation of what the footprint and gardens were like for each of the three houses.

No. 55 Baker Street, c. 1840, is a small villa and the former studio of Henry Fox Talbot from 1844-1846. Much of his work for "The Pencil of Nature", the first book published with photographic illustrations, was executed and published during his time at this studio. - (list as local listing?) 33-39 Baker Street are unusual in that they were designed as two symmetrical pairs of two semi-detached houses each with doors to the side. Their condition is poor and their similarity is difficult to discern due to modifications.

Russell Street is notable for the large run of Georgian terraced and semi-detached houses along the west side of the street, most built prior to 1833. With no houses on the east side of the street save the two story house no. at the corner of Baker Street, the houses were accorded and nice view towards the central part of Reading.

Nos. 6-34 are smaller two story red brick structures mostly with basements with fanlights and curved ground floor windows. They are more modest than their neighbours to the south of Baker Street at 36-46, which are generally much larger 3 story plus basement terraced villas and also of red brick. Notable from this terrace is 36, which was originally a 2 story single family detached house, not entirely dissimilar to the two story detached listed house at 41 Russell Street, before it was connected to the rest of the terrace.

48-50 Russell Street are a striking pair of semi-detached villas made of Bath stone notable for their nearly identical nature to the semi-detached Bath stone villas at Eldon Terrace to the east of the centre of town. The red brick terraced Georgians of Russell Street all have slate roofs, the majority with front door fanlights, panelled and moulded doors, and sash windows with wide stucco bands above the ground floor, many with arched ground floor windows. 40 and 42 both have first floor iron window balconies of Regency style acanthus patterns. The dominance of the Georgian side of the street gives the wide thoroughfare a somewhat stoic but pleasing, grand appearance.

The Oxford Road contains a great number of similarly aged Georgian terraces, many poorly altered by the addition of modern shopfronts and devastatingly poor maintenance. These terraces are along the south side of the Road at 149-177 Oxford Road, 187-193, 195-197, 199-203 and Prospect Terrace at 237 – 247 including 2 Lorne Street Oxford Road along the south side of the street.

195-203 (c1830), despite the losses of earlier fanlights, is notable as the best maintained of the terraces. This is a terraced group of set back three storey, red brick, three windows wide houses without the ruinous shop front alterations of many of the other terraces.

199-203 is a group of set back stuccoed terraces with moulded detailing and cill bands of roughly the same age, which despite being in poor condition creates the imposing appearance of a grand terrace.

The long string of Georgian terraces from 149-177 is in the worst condition along the street, with several in worrisome shape indeed. Prospect Terrace, a 3 story red-brick set back terrace at 237-247 is of red brick, possessing remarkably fine original fanlights and windows despite the terrace's overall poor condition. It has some later altered Victorian variety to its façades and fenestrations (at 241 notably) with very poorly maintained frontages, with 239 recently having been restored.

There are several other remaining single houses along the road that remind the passers by clearly of its Georgian beginnings. No. 101 (Roxborough House, formerly Zinzan House) is a small red brick 2 story villa c.1840, located on the junction with Howard Street with a notable original side window near the roofline and an extant back brick garden wall extending around the back along Howard Street. 4 and 4A Howard Street are a pair of semi-detached terraces of which 4A maintains its original rusticated ground floor. 104 Oxford

Road (c.1840s) on the north side of the street is a two story red brick with an attractive central Doric porticoed front porch landing.

The Oxford Road Primary School, c. 1880-83 with an extension from 1894, is a striking red brick building with an original entrance tower and red tiled patterning on the entrance gable. There is a regrettable modern central entrance connector area currently in use.

The Holy Trinity Church on the Oxford Road forms a most attractive view from Russell Street looking north down at it with views of Caversham beyond that. The Church has a series of catacombs beneath it, built into a former gravel pit. 118 Oxford Road is set back on a garden path alongside the church, and is a striking listed, large 2 ½ story hidden gem likely by local architect John Billing of ashlar stone with a slate roof and extruded chimneys.

The Conservation Area also contains a grade II listed Jewish synagogue in Goldsmid Road which is the only purpose built synagogue in Berkshire. This dates to 1900, and is a well detailed Moorish styled building utilising red brick and Bath stone dressings topped with an attractive bell tower of lead and wood.

Buildings of local interest within the conservation area

The detailed map of the area (see appendix) highlights historical buildings of note was then a conservation area. There are a great number of these buildings, some which could conceivably become listed buildings within the next decade. Others are noted for their charm or for particular other reasons. It remains to be seen as this writing, the importance that Reading Borough Council will place on these buildings within conservation areas in their new Local Plan policies next year when it is published.

Public realm

Paving

Whilst the majority of the paving in the Conservation Area is modern tarmacadam or concrete, many of the streets retain their 19th century granite kerbs and stone gutters, with the occasional setted crossover. The long run of large stone pavement along the Oxford Road is commendable but in poor condition, made worse by occasional tarmac repairs. The tarmac pavements in most of the area, do nothing for the area, and in fact detract enormously in some areas. The roads are in little better condition and in some areas again, the condition is extremely poor with tarmac patches over the years really taking their toll on the attractiveness of the area.

Modern hewn stone and brick walkways near the school on the Oxford Road, elevate the appearance of the immediate area, seeming to belie the justification for not using such paving materials where high densities of pedestrians can easily trip as this is a very high volume pedestrian access area. better brick paving and sett stone pavements should be highly encouraged throughout the area, where funds are able to be sourced as its positive effect will help the area considerably. An incomplete but noted list of paving conditions are here – where notable:

- **Anstey Road and Body Road:** have small stone kerbs and guttering, noticeable curve at 11 Baker Street side of Anstey for former entrance to garage
- **Baker Street: west of Russell:** granite kerbs and gutters large stone with some smaller stone at the back entrance to 36 Russell Street and at 61 Baker Street; **east of Russell Street:** granite stone kerbs and smaller stone guttering, notable outside the entrance to the back of 55 Baker Street and along the south side of the street ; larger stone gutters at the North side; Howard Street: simple granite kerbs; smaller red cobbles about 1.5 m. square outside of the Oasis Community Centre at 21 Baker Street.
- **Belle Vue Terrace:** still retains at end of road, appx 6m square of sett stones from former pavement in fan pattern. Worthy of retention.

- **Carey Street:** has small granite stoned kerbs and guttering
- **Castle Crescent:** 100 m.m. granite kerbs with 300 m.m. stone gutters
- **Castle Hill:** 300 m.m. wide granite kerbs and 300 m.m. granite gutter, with three lines of granite setts on the corner junctions
- **Clifton Street;** granite stone kerbs and guttering with large stones
- **Coley Avenue:** long expanse run of tall buttressed, brick walls at west side of avenue, all worthy of retention. Gravel covered wall with wooden arched toppers along 2 Bath Road is highly regrettable and effort should be made to correct. 150m.m. kerb stones with smaller sett stones at entrance to Yeomanry House
- **Coley Hill:** 150 m.m. granite kerbs with three lines of granite setts creating the gutter
- **Field Road:** wide 300mm. Granite kerbs and gutters
- **Franklin Street:** 300 mm. granite stone kerbs and gutters
- **Goldsmid Road:** narrow granite kerbs with many curve backs for mews style /garage entrances, wider stone granite guttering at north side of street;
- **Jesse Terrace:** 300 m.m. wide stone kerbs with short lengths of 100 m.m. wide stone gutters
- **Oxford Road:** 300 m.m. wide granite kerbs with modern cast iron bollards. Stone pavement along the Oxford Road – south side from Howard to Prospect- many sections in very poor condition, small section of large stones on north side in front of 114 Oxford Road pavement; " modern" bricked drive entrances at no. 247-249, no. 263, 267,271
- **Prospect Street and Prospect Mews:** Granite stone kerbs with stone setted two deep gutters; appx 4 sq. m area of stone cobbles at the entrance area to the Mews that adds a large measure of visual charm to the entrance; appx 3 sq m of cobbles at entrance behind Oxford Road property on west side of Prospect street, worthy of retention.
- **Waylen Street:** 100 mm granite kerbs with few gutters, setted stones in front of garage at no. 22a
- **Russell Street:** 100-300 m.m. granite kerbs and setted gutters
- **Zinzan Street:** 100 m.m. 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



The only bit of paved roadway left in the conservation area at the end of Belle Vue Road, in typical sett stone fan pattern

Cast Iron Bollards and benches

The Oxford Road and the east side of Howard Street have rows of fairly modern cast iron

bollards, that could lend an attractive appearance to the area, however, they are currently all in a state of disrepair. Along the Oxford Road near to the School, are unsympathetically painted turquoise green bollards to perhaps coordinate with a railing scheme to control pedestrian cross walks near the school. It is understood that local efforts are being made to try to repaint them black, which would be beneficial to the Georgian terraces that they sit near. The benches along the Oxford Road are also painted the same unsympathetic green and there have been proposals for their removal as they attract ASB and vagrant behaviour.

Cast iron bollards along Howard Street near the row of trees blocking the IDR could contribute more positively to the area, if painted and tended to more appropriately.

Notable brick walls throughout the conservation area

The largely red brick wall stock in the area contribute greatly to the overall ambience and charm of the area with its strong use of red brick. Often, they are capped with curved top capping bricks as they cascade down to lower heights. These especially should be noted and retained where possible.

Some walls are in reasonable condition; however, others are in quite poor condition and are in need of repair. Frequently efflorescence towards the bottom is occurring, some are loose and others have plants sprouting in them. Their retention in most all cases should be considered a priority, and within conservation areas, planning permission is needed to remove any wall over 1 m in height.

The list is not possible to be exhaustive and just because a wall is not listed does not mean that it is not considered worthy of retention. There are many walls that are out of the view of street paths and are not possible to be recorded.

All walls over 1 m in height are required to seek planning permission for their removal.

Brick walls of note:

- **Anstey Road:** The south side of Anstey Road has walls along the south side of the Castle Street properties at The Castle Tap (former Horse and Jockey) no. 120 Castle Street that are notable and worthy of retention, including the presence of a former fireplace in the corner along the west portion of that wall. This may have been connected with a shed at some time.: The high red brick walls at the back of 122 Castle Hill and Walford Hall on Carey Street are tall appx 2m red brick with curved caps and worthy of retention
- **Baker Street:** The high brick walls between the terraces of 36- 48 Baker Street to the back of the properties are visible noticeable, intact and are worthy of note and protection. The folly-type garage /shed entrance at 79A is a notable charming feature and its façade is worthy of protection (notable stone at the top marked "AHL 1925". The red brick wall outside of 45 Clifton (appx 1.5 m) facing Baker Street has an attractive curved edged capping. The tall appx 2m high brick wall at the back curtilage of 36 Russell Street is of high quality with a cap top, nice high side brick wall to 1 Jesse Terrace with heavy efflorescence; decorative low brick wall in front of Rednirt Villas- no 8 – 8A, fine taller brick similarly decorated side wall to no. 8; nice brick wall with round window feature at the side curtilage of 2 Baker Street (window currently boarded up.
- **Belle Vue Terrace:** significant 2 m high brick wall along east side of road, separating Bellevue House from land sold off to create Belle Vue Terrace, stepped down with topography, simple small square detailed brick top, heavy efflorescence with poor condition side gated doors; wall at end of street to back of Baker Street terrace, missing one cannonball stone pillar top with poor condition wooden doors

- **Carey Street:** The stucco side and red brick wall back of 124 Castle Street and its back parking area, are notable for the street and add charm to the immediate surroundings.
- **Castle Crescent:** unusual grey brick 1.6 m appx high wall in front of 3 Castle Crescent, with nice white brick curved cap with detailing on top and white brick course string at base; nice curved cap top with contrast string course on side and front brick walls at no 24 and no. 9
- **Clifton Street:** High red brick stepped down wall with topography-on side of 36 Baker Street matching other side of Baker Street terrace at no.48 Baker Street, angled caps at top, fairly good condition with occasional weeds growing in between bricks.
- **Coley Avenue:** long expanse run of tall buttressed, brick walls at west side of avenue, all worthy of retention. Gravel covered wall with wooden arched toppers along 2 Bath Road is highly regrettable and effort should be made to correct.
- **Coley Park Road:** nice brick walls to the west at the side wall of 21 Castle Crescent, nicely detailed brick wall on east side as back curtilage wall of 22 Mansfield Road stepped with curved cap top and string course detailing and recessed squares, pillared detail for stability, also nice short curved cap brick wall in front of side door for iron rail (replacement) support;
- **Field Road:** nice capped and detailed red brick 1.7 m high appx red brick wall forming the west curtilage line of no. 111; interesting red brick collection of end of garden walls with occasional nice wooden garage and side door entrances for Coley Hill residences above
- **Goldsmid Road:** south at entrance to Baker Street, alongside 48 Baker Street and on the side curtilage of property, tall appx 2m red brick wall with red brick angled caps at top, stepped down to follow topography, condition is fair with efflorescence; Slightly shorter red brick wall on west side curtilage of no.50, plain top, fair condition with efflorescence, with charming side entrance wooden door.
- **Howard Street:** fine high red brick wall to the back of 101 Oxford Road along perimeter to Howard Street pavement and along back against 2 Howard Street property, simple angled caps, simple tall solid wood , painted black doors to back, currently undergoing repairs; Also noted is the high visible red brick wall of the Providence Chapel beyond the outside wall at the back of the back garden parking area; high red brick wall to side of 38 Howard Street towards back property- likely original to former garage/stable
- **Mansfield Road:** many pillared entrances to front gardens with low brick walls, some original, interesting capped and stepped front and side wall to no. 27-29
- **Oxford Road:** low old pillared likely original entrance red brick walls outside no. 149-153; stone front walls of Holy Trinity Church with stone pillars are of note and in poor condition; 255 Oxford Road – old original low brick wall in poor condition
- **Prospect Street:** tall appx. 2 m high red brick walls behind Oxford Road terrace, in fairly poor condition with efflorescence, built in 2-3 different time periods; notable stepped and capped brick wall on street opposite at no 2 Prospect edging back of Oxford road curtilage line. Retention is advised.
- **Russell Street:** Nice brick wall with recent brightly toned repair work at Seafield Court (no. 37-39) with curved cap tops one step curve following down the hill; curved top{

some replacement low wall around parsonage at no.35; bath stone pillar and (replacement) iron rail fence at no.48-50; old side curved red brick wall at 50 ; old curved cap high appx. 1.5 m curved red brick wall stepped down and leading to back garage at no. 81 (currently with heavy unsuitable signage); high 2 m brick around side of no. 54 with attractive painted wood gate at pillared back entrance

Street lighting

Street lighting in the area varies but the majority of the lighting is provided by slim silver modern steel columns with simple glass lanterns. The main thoroughfares have the tallest and largest fixtures with shorter ones in the less busy residential streets.

Along Anstey Road, Castle Crescent, Mansfield Road and Goldsmid Road and in streets just the west of the conservation area some 19th cast iron gas lights and later 20c century variations on the look exist in the area, all of which are being converted to modern low energy lighting.

It would be ideal if improvements to street lighting could be made where more heritage appropriate light poles and fixtures could be used. Grants for such projects may only be granted to areas where there is greatest need and are viewed by the most numbers of persons.

The Council is at this time currently under a halogen replacement lighting scheme to replace lights throughout the town and it is hoped that local pressure groups will be able to exert influence for the retention of some of these older gas light and mid 20c fixtures as they contribute nicely to the overall heritage look of the area. The lamp poles were made at local foundries by and large and a report recently undertaken in the town, identifies their origins.

Street lighting at night from the very tall lights along the IDR bridge cast a harsh unnatural glow to Howard Street, Body Road, Anstey Road and Zinzan Street at night.

Former gas and 20th century fixtures are noted on the map and as here:

- Anstey Road: has 4 mid 60s curved neck light poles worthy of retention for the street
- Castle Crescent: 60s style swan neck light pole outside no 3
- Coley Hill: 2 60s type swan neck fixtures
- Franklin Street: one fluted gas light fixture (worthy of retention) outside no 4,
- Goldsmid Road: one fluted gas light fixture (worthy of retention) outside no 56 appx(?), one fluted gas light fixture (worthy of retention) opposite Clifton Road entrance.
- Mansfield Road: two 1960's swan neck light poles

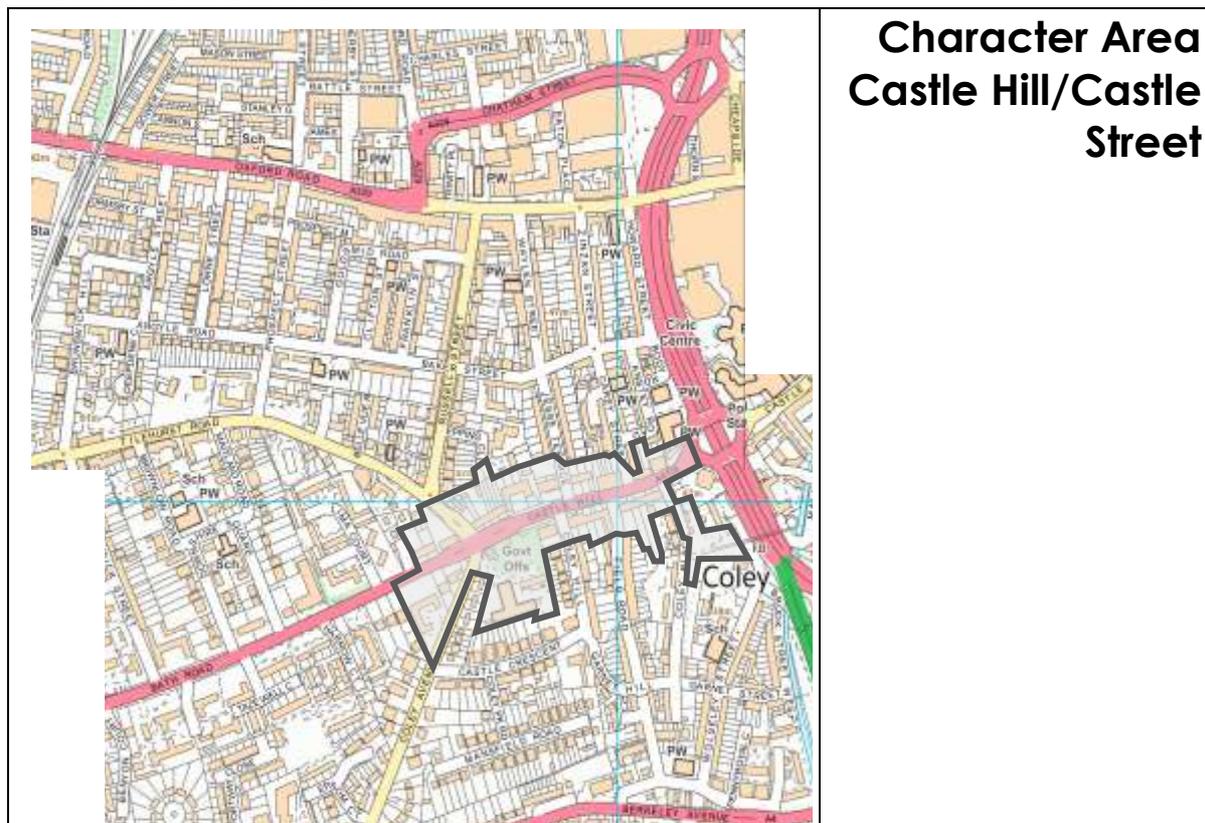
Old Road signage:

- old metal Russell Street sign at side of Pavilion; old metal Goldsmid road signage at corner just off of Russell Street, above that, ghost signage of Division Street pointing to Westfield Grove barely visible
- Old metal signs at the corner of Baker Street and Body Road
- Ghost signage "H. Jackson, Ladies and Gents TAILORS on wall at 2 Argyle Street facing back curtilage line of 255 Oxford Road. Should be protected

Overhead wires

The effect of overheard wires to the public realm in conservation area due to the intense population within the houses due to HMO proliferation has had a disastrous effect on V views especially on some streets. It is suggested, that a programme to look to the removal of unnecessary overhead wires should be undertaken. This is discussed in the appendix.

Character Areas



Character Area Castle Hill/Castle Street

Castle Hill/Castle Street

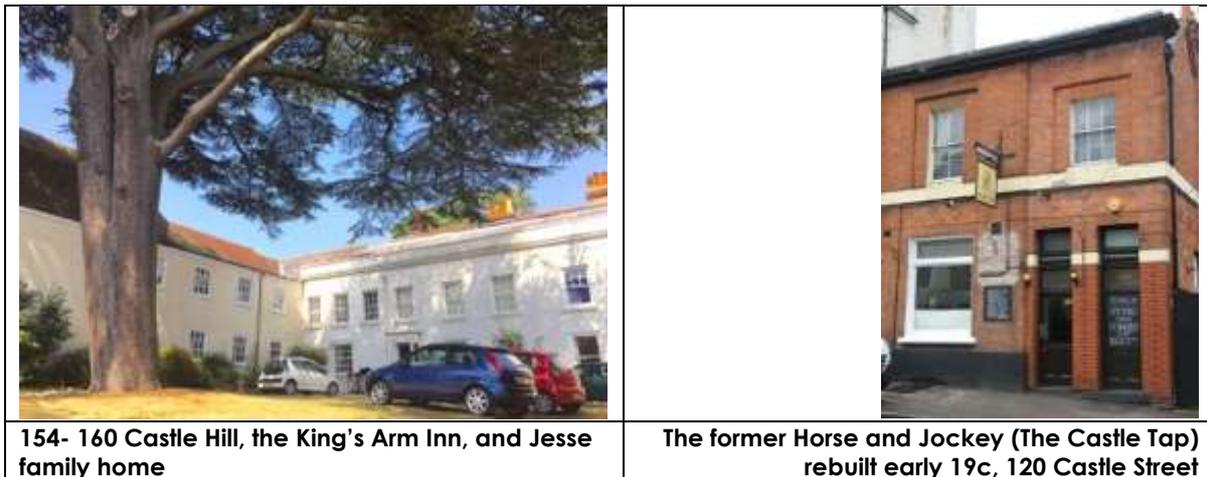
With its wide, open street leading up a gently rising slope from town along the chalk and clay escarpment to the intersection of Castle Hill with Russell Street and Coley Avenue, the roadway of Castle Hill and Castle Street form one of the most attractive and arguably the finest streets within the Conservation Area. Its leafy winding street with notable trees and classic grand Georgian houses afford some fine views and are its principal characteristics that contribute to its high value within the Conservation Area. The street is largely Georgian in character and feel with 2 ½ to 3 story houses, although there are several later additions along the road. It maintains an over-all grand air with the set back of the large residential properties, large gardens and a leafy vista.

The great amount of detailing and original (or like-for-like replacement) features on the houses of the street, add to the character of the area, and the removal of historic features on any of the properties in the area, would severely affect the charm and interest of the street. As virtually all properties are listed on the street, this risk is somewhat mitigated by their listings. Nonetheless, it is something to be monitored in the future before any egregious disappearance of features happens.

Castle Hill and Castle Street form one of the original old medieval routes out of Reading town centre's earliest core centered at the parish church at St. Mary's Butts. Despite the fact that in 1969, the IDR crossed Castle Street, dividing the area dramatically and permanently from its relationship to the town centre, the eastern end of the street still retains the original town-side name of Castle Street. The western part of the street which was renamed Castle Hill in the late 18c from Jesse Terrace on the north side of the street and from Coley Hill on the

south side of the street.

Today's street affords us the understanding of the history of the buildup of the area. As was common with early primary roads such as this, early build up along the route became a combination of inns and public houses designed to cater to this traffic. The grade II* listed King's Arms Inn at 154 to 160 Castle Hill is a stunning reminder of this early development. There was a building on this property as early as the end of the 17c. Additionally, the former Horse and Jockey (now called the Castle Tap at 120 Castle Street) although rebuilt in the early 19th century, remains on the same spot where it was first mentioned at the end of the 17th century.



The earliest maps of the expanding area to the west of the town centre, (Coates' map 1802), show the original build-up along the north side of the street which afforded the properties nice open southern views down the hill towards the Holy Brook river bed over old bleaching grounds, nursery gardens and the remains of the Civil War defenses.

The grade II listed Yeomanry House with its c. 1840s gate house (131 and 133 Castle Hill) and large front garden plot facing out onto Castle Hill, is the finest remaining example of the style of grand houses ensconced in large gardens for the wealthy and prominent businessmen of Reading, who chose to congregate near the intersection of Castle Hill and Russell Street in a display of their wealth and grandeur to all passersby.

The prominent Jesse family took up residency at the King's Arm Inn and prominent businessman and market gardener, Henry Pratt Swallow built his home at that intersection which remains at 2 Bath Road, although it's context is sadly ruined by the busy modern intersection. Still, a fine view of the grand chimneys atop this home can be had from Russell Street at the rear of the property. Of the other homes that followed suit in the early 19th c near this intersection, the only other extant evidence is Bath Place at 1 Bath Road, which is largely hidden behind a high brick wall and is sadly very poorly altered at the top of the house. The grand trees (many with TPOs) along the Bath Road near the entrances to Janson Court and Lima Court are the only visible reminders of the great manors that were once at the back of large front gardens in what was an early exclusive enclave for the wealthy.



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



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



William Pratt Swallow's house, 2 Bath Road

Early in the 19c, (largely prior to the 1830s) housing went up on both sides of the road. Building began creeping out from the town and the handsome house at 107 retains to this day the structure of what many of these houses many have had, with its stables and back garden footprint still intact. The houses on the east end of Castle Street 107-111 and 122- 132 define this early expansion in the large rusticated front stuccoed houses, with original arched windows, and fanlights, still intact today.

The early 19c Bath stone Blenheim Terrace, from 97- 105 is attractive and generally well-maintained, with the exception of 105 in a poor state of repair, and represents one of only two major uses of Bath stone in the conservation area.

The fine stand of houses from 113-121 form a typical terrace of large grand Georgian homes of differing appearances. The terrace is an extremely attractive stand of houses because of this variety, despite regrettable dropped kerbs to the fronts. The rusticated paired and channeled pilasterstrips topped with wreaths of 113 form a particularly striking end of terrace property. The house lost its stable entrance c.1900 when the entrance to Field Road was created.



Blenheim Terrace, Bath stone terrace, 97-105 Castle Street



Charmingly diverse terrace of Georgian properties 113-121 Castle Street



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

Thomas Jesse and his family of developers ensconced at 154-160 Castle Hill had great interest in the surrounding area, and their hand in developing has a particular mark to it, displayed to its best in a number of the properties along the route, notably at Heritage Court (144A – 152) and further down the road at 162A- 166 which have attractive verandas with concave metal roofing (reminiscent of the nearby Jesse Terrace) and Regency style metal work.



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



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

The later c1840s, rusticated stucco and red brick terrace at 168-174 is formidable in scale, and displays the waning influence of late Georgian styling. This terrace and would have taken out the Jesse family's side garden to 154-160 Castle Hill when built, signaling the change in this area of town for the wealthiest of Reading's businessmen. The terrace is sadly rather poorly cared for with multiple occupancy having a poor effect on the appearance of

the properties along the terrace. Constant estate agent signage and poor maintenance of the frontages and façades of the properties contribute to its weary appearance.

The modern purpose built Berkshire Record Office on the Yeomanry House site, is substantial in size, but commendable for the design of its façade and its footprint which sets it back in a subservient fashion from the historic house and its front gardens. The late 20c residential building at 129 Castle Hill is the most substantial drawback to the street. The flats at Castlegate at 114 Castle Street, though recent, attempted reasonably well to draw upon cues from the Georgian street and as a result, is a far less innocuous intrusion on the street.



**Berkshire Record Office,
on the Yeomanry House site**

Uses: The street is almost entirely residential with the single historical pub, towards town (The Castle Tap, 120 Castle Street) and the pre-1870s villas incorporated into the Conservation Area along the south side of Bath Road house the Kadampa Buddhist Meditation Centre at no. 9 and the James Brown Kcare Heath facility at 5 and 7 Bath Road.



The view up from Castle Street to 3-7 Coley Place



**south west end of Castle Hill,
with famous TPO Cypress tree**



**A striking street view from the east end of Castle Hill
looking to Swallow's house up at the intersection of the Bath Road,
permission- Joe Doak**

Materials: A large amount of stucco rendering dominates the many Georgian façades along the route, many have rusticated ground floor frontages. Most properties are attractively painted in pleasing neutral shades of white and off- white. The yellow façade of 107 with its dark green doors is considered to be the original colours of the house.

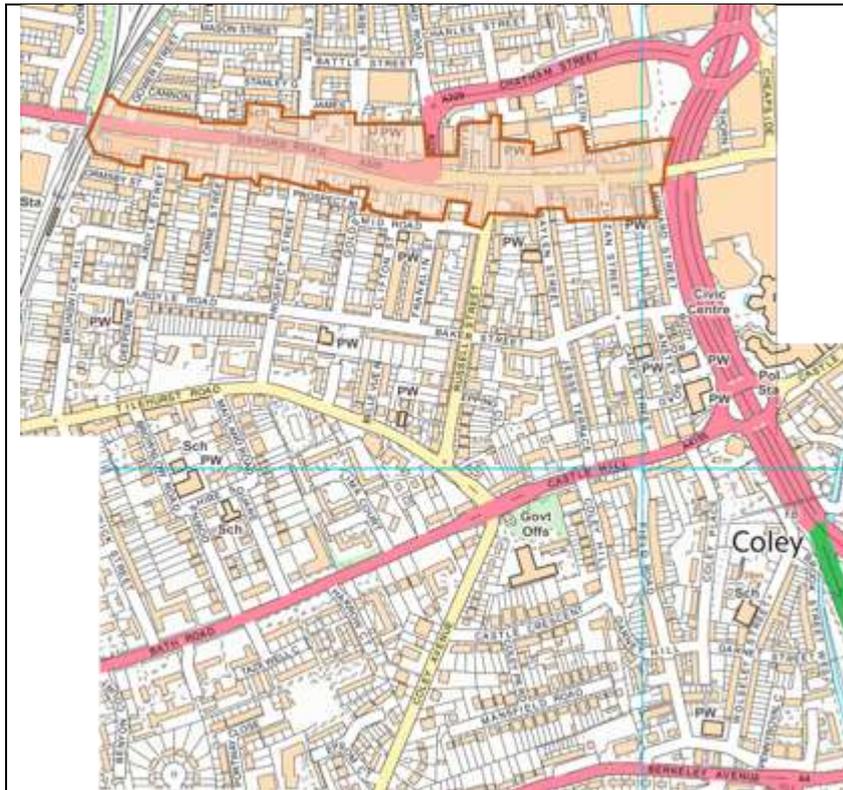
The red brick that began to dominate building in the 1840s is noted only on a few buildings and at that, only on upper floors and at the sides and backs of properties. The unusual Bath stone coloured stuccoed façades of 134-144 are said to be reconstituted Bath stone stucco and form a striking façade. 1 The unusual salmon colour brick of the c1840 gate house for Yeomanry House is original and quite unique for the time period to be used so dominantly. It was mixed with red brick railings and a red brick back half for kitchen and toilet facilities until recently. Stucco and stone are the dominant trimming materials on the street. Roofs are largely of Welsh slate with a smattering of red tile (most notable at the mansard roof of 160 Castle Hill).

Key positive Characteristics of the Castle Hill/Castle Street character area:

- Wide open space with nice open views to sky and down to town – little changed from the past
- Good views at several points along the street towards Reading and of the trees and houses along the street
- The grand Cedar of Lebanon tree at 154- 160 Castle Hill and other trees along the route (Yeomanry House garden and others) that add great green value to the area
- Attractive groupings of largely listed Georgian terraces: Bath stone terrace at 97- 105, Regency styled terrace at 134-144, Heritage Court and varied Georgian terrace at 113- 121
- The former King's Arm Inn at 154-160 Castle Hill
- Yeomanry House and its in situ front garden and historic drive and former gatehouse
- 107 Castle Hill with its original features of house, stables and back garden

Negative Features of the Castle Hill/Castle Street character area:

- Busy and heavy traffic especially dominant during rush hours
- Poor quality tarmacked pavement surfaces
- Clutter of excessive modern street furniture
- Poor pedestrian links at mid points along the road
- Poorly maintained front boundaries in some areas and dropped kerb parking at 107- 109, 115-121 Castle Hill and Heritage Court)
- Modern buildings at 114 Castle Street and 129 Castle Hill
- Poor condition of some properties at 127 Castle Hill, 168-174 Castle Hill (terrace), 2 Bath Road, (Swallows residence) , 1 Bath Road, 105-111 Castle Street



Character Area Oxford Road

The Oxford Road was one of the earliest roads out of Reading to the east, being the primary conduit to Pangbourne and Oxford south of the River Thames. East of the intersection of Russell Street, the Oxford Road was called Oxford Street until at least the mid- 1850s but this had been changed by the 1870s.

Today, the Oxford Road in Reading is well known for its vibrant multi-cultural array of shops lining an active pedestrian and vehicular traffic route. It is also plagued by a self- defeating reputation as a somewhat rough area that decades of crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) have given it. The “broken window theory” in townscapes has proven itself true along the road in many patches.

The area has many properties owned and rented by the diverse community of Reading's native – born and immigrant populations. An influx of immigrants has been present along the Oxford Road since the 1950's when early immigrant populations found their first homes and retail establishments in the area. This factor gives the Road its undeniable favour, and provides much of its excitement and vigor. However, with the constant reshuffling of new owners and tenants in shops and residences, there is no one unifying spirit along the road and this leads to a wide variety of interpretation of what is attractive or even necessary in property appearances and maintenance. In sections, run-down stages of ethnic food shops and an excessive quantity of off-licenses hold sway. Poorly maintained multi-unit housing within once fine Georgian and Victorian façades threaten the area. Abuses of listed buildings, quick, higgledy- piggedly renovations, loud garish signage and sometimes cruel and illegal development not in keeping with the historic nature of the road spring up consistently. Wires, satellite dishes, and pipes litter façades above shops and some regrettable modern builds have failed to unite the street in being able to easily understand its historic context.

Despite these factors, the underlying historic fabric remains strongly visible, and in grasping an understanding of the story of Reading as its population progressed west of town, no street can tell this story better than the vibrant Oxford Road. It is this mix of its inalienable historical factors over- laid with some negative superficial issues, that present the Oxford Road as a

prime candidate for a solid dose of rejuvenation via an injection of grant funding and solid community leadership. Without such actions, the degradation will continue, and instead of what can potentially be a very positive vibrant area, it seems destined to further degradation over the years. Current traffic minimization schemes and revitalization projects, are in discussion and slowly moving forward. It is hoped that these actions will have a positive affect along the route.

These are the reasons that within this appraisal, the proposal for the inclusion of so much more of this historical and fascinating street is made. In making the case for possible funding streams to recognize the street and inject funding and effort, that the case for the inclusion of the entirety of the Oxford Road from the IDR bridge to the railway bridge is made.

	
<p>Parade of ethnic grocers and shops, Oxford Road between Russell Street and Waylen Street</p>	<p>Georgian housing, modern successful pastiche and shop front buildings</p>

The history of the modern build-up of this medieval route is seen in the first instance by the many impressive stands of terraced Georgian housing along the route. This early Georgian infill of the route can be very clearly seen starting from the town end next to the IDR bridge and running clear to Argyle Street in the west. There are several long terraces of listed buildings dating to the early 19c, notably at 149-177 Oxford Road, 187-193, 195-197, 197-203 and Prospect Terrace at 237 – 247 Oxford Road (including 2 Lorne Street) along the south side of the street. All are in poor to moderate condition with several being converted to shop fronts at their bases. The Georgian houses and terraces line the route largely of red brick with a noted grand stand of stuccoed villas at nos. 197-203. Notable are the single houses at 101 and 104 Oxford Road. Amazingly, most of the listed Georgians still retain original windows and doors. Some brick walls onto pavements in front of these properties (notably at 149-153) need attention and re-pointing but are original.



Reading Welfare Rights- detached Georgian with original high back garden walls



National Meteorological Society detached Georgian with porticoed front porch



Run-down Georgian Terrace 147 on west



Grand stuccoed Georgian Sidney Terrace at 197-203 Oxford Road

With the creation of Waylen Street and Zinzan Street in the latter 1830s to 1840s, the two-story shops had completely filled in between Russell Street and Howard by the early 1850s. The history of shops to provide wares to the local residents west of town, has always been a feature of the road and the shops there now are today's generation of that tradition. Their frontages, today, however, lack respect to the age and history of the properties. A more unified appearance could raise the profile of the area and increase profitability for many of the shops. Poor and irregular street frontages do not help.

The parish church at the bottom of Russell Street was built to serve the local community building up to the north and south of the Oxford Road. Later in the century, with the rise of non- Conformist Churches in the area, Providence Chapel arrived (c 1859) and towards the end of the century, Bridge Hall was built for Reading's Open Brethren group. The Pavilion, once a well-attended cinema which opened in 1929 is now home to the Lifespring Church who has restored much of the original cinema's interior detailing.



Holy Trinity Parish Church, at the intersection of Russell Street



Providence Chapel c 1859, 103 Oxford Road (google maps)



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



Bridge Hall, originally built for the Reading Open Brethren Group (google maps)

Sadly, modern infill which blights the historic landscape is most intense on the north side of the street. This is most out-of-keeping at the petrol station at 150 Oxford Road, and the set back Tesco Express at 211-221 with its tarmacked parking surface. Both would serve the area better with softened green front entrances. Eaton Court at 104-112 Oxford Road, the planned residential unit at 114 Oxford Road, the Oddfellow's Hall at 118, the poor quality and modern collection of buildings along the north side of the Oxford Road between Trinity Place and the Bedford Road also all reflect poorly back onto the overall appearance of the historic Oxford Road. Reduced or gavelled parking areas with landscaped borders could improve this.

Alison Court at 193 Oxford Road provides pleasant green space with some nice trees, but also offers a chance for a development more in keeping with the street in time. The MTC Motorcycles dealership at 267-271 Oxford Road is a shop that aesthetically contributes little positive to the street scene in an area of mixed residential and shop- front use. It seems entirely without redeeming aesthetic value to the area, asides from its obvious profitability.

Flying over the west end of the proposed extension to the Conservation Area is the railway bridge which quite neatly divides the eastern end of the Oxford Road up from an even more commercial run of shops further to the west. The Reading West Railway station is in the process of modernisation with Network Rail, a move that will likely substantially improve the area. The railway bridge, whilst not the original brick bridge, is the reminder of the industry that arrived to Reading in the mid 19c and the success that it brought along with it. Despite

its past-expiration decoration, designed by school children in the 1980s, the railway bridge still speaks volumes about the exciting past along the Oxford Road in the 19c.

It is through the inclusion of the entire area within the conservation area, that Reading will begin to take note and to take more pride in the street. And it is with a revitalisation scheme that the history of the road can shine in a greatly enhanced road easily fit for purpose for 21c living and commercial venture.



**Reading West railway bridge,
Oxford Road**

Uses: Generally, the predominant feature of the road is its inherent charm with the small businesses that dominate the ground floors along the route. Ethnic grocery stores are dominant, with a variety of Asian, Polish, Indian and Sri Lankan markets and take away shops. Intermingled are other businesses such as betting shops, hair salons, key shops, estate agents, a motorcycle shop and a sounds store. Surgeries and dentists are along the route. Health and welfare services dot the route servicing that portion of society in the area in need of these services. Numerous non- conformist churches dot the road along with the historical parish church at the base of Russell Street.

Materials: There is an enormous amount of brick that went into the building of the Oxford Road. Much of it is red brick, with the majority of the shop front properties being over-painted usually in white.

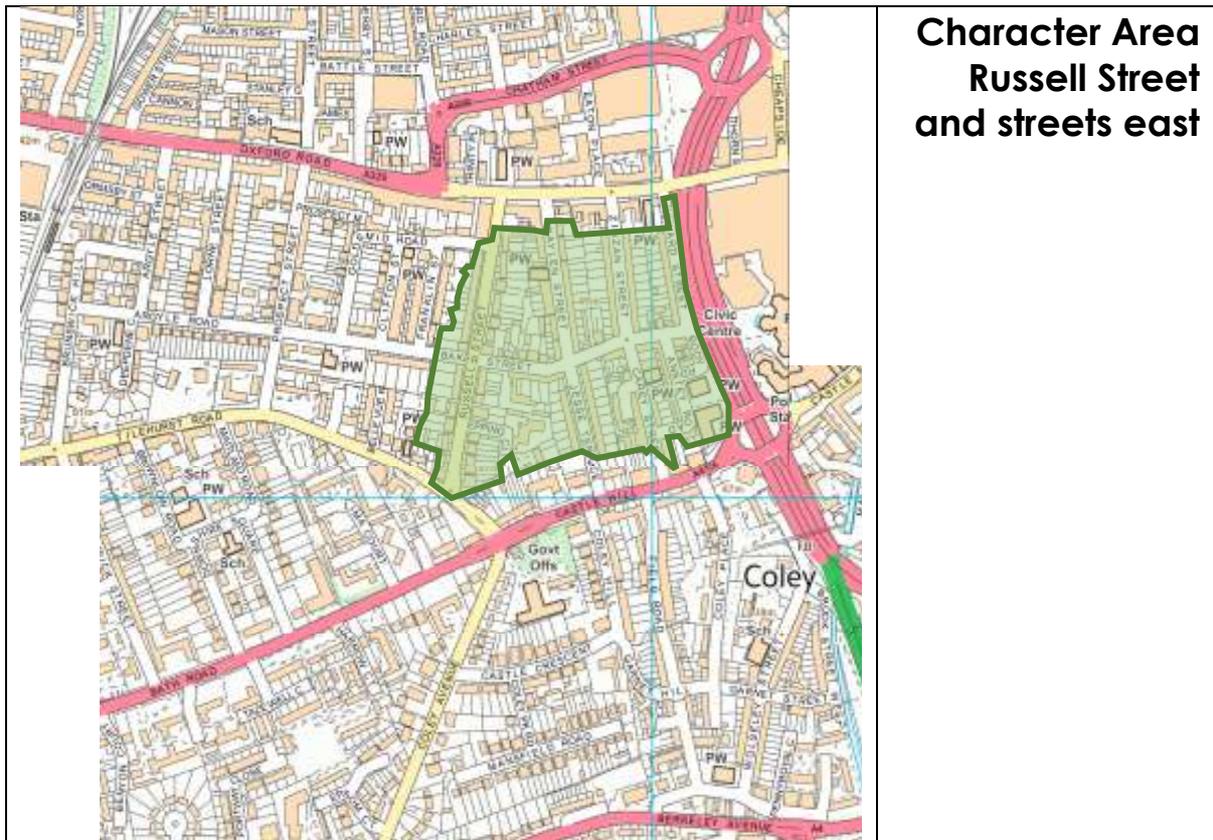
Key Positive Characteristics of the Oxford Road character area:

- The Georgian terraces of 149-177, 187-193, 195-197, 197-203 and Prospect Terrace at 237 – 247 Oxford Road (incl. 2 Lorne Street) along the south side of the street- despite their poor condition
- Oxford Road Community School with its well-kept appearance and positive community contribution
- Holy Trinity Church and its sealed off catacombs at the base of Russell Street
- Providence Chapel c. 1859 with its polychrome façade
- Bridge Hall originally built in 1890 for Reading's Open Brethren and currently being restored for community use
- The Pavilion at the corner of Russell Street- formerly a well-known movie theatre - now the home of Lifespring Church and well- restored
- 118 Oxford Road- set off the Road but an architectural gem
- 101 and 104 Oxford Road, early Georgian homes
- Recent tree plantings along the route

- An inspired rebuild at 179 Oxford Road
- A good renovation at 239 Oxford Road

Negative Features of the Oxford Road character area:

- Modern infill which blights the historic landscape, BP Station at 150 Oxford Road, the Tesco Express at 211-221, Eaton Court at 104-112 Oxford Road, the Oddfellow's Hall at 118, Richer Sounds at 118A, the poor quality and modern collection of buildings along the north side of the Oxford Road between Trinity Place and the Bedford Road, Alison Court at 193 Oxford Road, 267-271 MTC Motorcycles dealership.
- Poor state of repair of many of the properties along the Road, with excessive and redundant wires and satellite dishes along building fronts. 109 and 109A are in particularly poor condition. The Royal Public House sits boarded up on the corner of Bedford.
- Many uPVC windows above store fronts and shop fronts not in keeping with the original building fabric are numerous
- garish, erratic signage litters the Road, causing a chaotic appearance along the route
- Rubbish bins for domestic properties and poorly kept front gardens with eroded front lines onto pavement
- Excessive and erratic public realm street signage litters the route
- Bollards painted in unsympathetic colour schemes blight the route
- The egregious removal and loss of a circle and teardrop fanlight door and original windows of the listed 139 and 141 Oxford Road
- The poor condition of the railway bridge over the Oxford Road



**Character Area
Russell Street
and streets east**

It is this character area that the best tells the progressive residential expansion in this area developed throughout the 19c. It is most regrettable that the many houses throughout this area are in poor repair from over use as houses of multiple occupation (HMOs), and collectively lend an air of run-down degradation to the entire Conservation Area as a result

of their condition. The pervasive use of uPVC windows and doors, overhead wires, rubbish bins and satellite dishes ruin the ability to appreciate the streets full of large late Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian terraced housing. Due to this, it takes a good bit of study to be able to read the development periods of the area.

The large Georgian terraced and semi-detached houses on Russell Street, with many original features intact are the oldest and contribute well to the neighbourhood. Jesse Terrace is a fine street of mid to late 19c single family large 3 storey homes with front porch verandas that are in excellent repair and are an island in the sea of degradation amplified by the large terraced houses along Waylen Street and Zinzan Street. Anstey, Body and Howard Streets are late 19c small, 2 storied houses that once all had charming polychrome detailing.

The history of the area began with Howard Street and the section of Baker Street from Howard to the bend in the road between Waylen Street and Russell Street, which are the oldest streets in this character area, appearing on the 1802 Coate's map. This eastern section of Baker Street was called Back Lane which lead to Hosier Street and into the town. Howard Street was in 1802 still an unnamed back road that lead to Back Lane, from the Oxford Road. The later extension of Baker Street from Back Lane to Russell Street was originally called Russell Terrace in the 1830s (tithe map).



Coates' Map of Reading, 1802 showing the Pangbourne Road (Oxford Road), the unnamed Howard Street, Back Lane, and the end of Swallow's fields where Russell Street was laid in



The 1830's published 1840s tithe map showing Russell Terrace (not useable for housing records)

Along Howard Street, there is a notable listed semi-detached Georgian at 4-4A Howard Street, with 4A retaining its original stuccoed rustication on the ground floor. No 2 (c 1850-70's) is an attractive and well-kept single family house of a notable large size, with a well-tended front garden. Along the side of Howard Street remaining after the east half of it was cleared in the 60s for the IDR, there are a number of heavy original iron railings that delineate the front of the property from 16-22 and two original, tall stuccoed and original curved stuccoed walls from the door outwards at 4 and 22. The line of trees planted to reduce sight and noise of the IDR, provide a pleasant green view along the street, if not sadly reminiscent of the other side of the street that was removed, which many old timers remember fondly.



2, 4 and 4A (listed Georgian semi-detached) Howard Street (google maps)



Original iron railings and stuccoed separator wall from 16-22 Howard Street (google maps)

Russell Street was founded by William Pratt Swallow in the first decades of the 19th century, as he wisely anticipated the need for housing in the area and that the days of market gardening in the area were coming to an end. Russell Street was laid in right on the eastern property lines of Swallow's former gardening fields to the west. The classic Georgian terraces of the west side of Russell Street are tangible evidence of the type of home that housed Reading's wealthiest businessmen in the opening decades of the 19th century. The long Georgian terraces of the west side of Russell Street had an advantaged view out over the Mrs. Zinzan's market garden fields to the east in front of them and across into the town centre.



Terraces along the west side of Russell Street (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, as those in Eldon Square



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



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 parsonage (c 1890) at the northeast corner of Baker Street and Russell Street with attractive polychrome and wooden detailing

The grand, if not slightly austere, view of Russell Street is heavily influenced by these Georgian terraces, many of which are in good condition, and a handful of them are still retained as single family homes. The lack of green on the street is regrettable and reduces the charm factor of the street. The two story Georgian terrace between nos. 6-14 closer to the Oxford Road suffers from poor maintenance and illegal removal of original windows. The detached house at no 54 at the corner of Tilehurst Road is notable for its light brick frontage and was built prior to 1853. The striking, well- cared for Bath stone semi- detached houses at 48 to 50 Russell Street are unique on the street and were the work of the same group of architects that filled Eldon Square with many semi- detached houses of this style.

The parsonage – originally of the Holy Trinity parish church, is a late c1890s Victorian with notable polychrome and terracotta features, still retaining the bars in the upper back window to prevent children from falling out the window from the upstairs nursery. It's Victorian wooden porch is also appositive notable detail. The much larger later Victorian villas on the east side of the street are in varying states of repair, but many have attractive polychrome detailing and a number of original features remain although a few have been sadly over- painted. The Nag's Head public house is a well-restored faux Tudor and enjoys a healthy popularity. It is listed as an Asset of Community Value.

The houses along Baker Street filled in along the south side prior to 1850 and the oldest stand of houses are stuccoed Georgians built prior to 1833 running from 33- 55 Baker Street, (originally Russell Terrace). Their poor condition belies their age and importance in the area. Fox Talbot's former studio, where work was done in developing the prints for the first mass-produced book containing photographs," The Pencil of Nature" which he published in 1844 is noted at no 55. The only listed houses along the road are at 33-35, a pair of two story matching semi- detached houses with side doors, degraded by poor maintenance.



Talbot's studio in the mid 1840's at 55 Baker Street.



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



Talbot and his workers in the back of his studio in Reading. To the far right you can see the houses of 33- 35 Baker Street. (Met public domain, downloaded)



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



VE party along Baker Street in front of terraces 37-49 Baker Street



Girl on bike c. 1940s, with 14 Baker Street to the left and 33-35 Baker Street to the right, 1 Jesse terrace is covered in ivy at the back



Mr. Gaylor, the milkman's family with car, c 1950-early 1960s, at the bend of the road on Baker Street looking west

The charming, fairly well preserved Alexandra Terrace at 23-31 is notable for its simple, honest, straight-forward red-brick with only the property at 23 being in notable poor condition.

Other buildings of note along Baker Street are Rednirt villas, a semi-detached villa dated 1904 with notable stone work on the outside. Rednirt was the original owner's name spelled backwards: Trinder.

The Oasis community centre (c 1850-1860s) was a former public house, inn and spirits retailer warehouse in the late 1800s. The original opening for loading to the basement exists along with a small space of sett stones on the pavement in front. Well-restored and maintained by the Carey Baptist Church, it is a building of great community value. Upstairs along a brick wall that formed the outside of the original building, the remains of a sign from the last decades of the 1800s remains advertising "Ferguson's Pale Ale, Stouts & Porter, Wine & Spirits," the retail and warehousing establishment that was there. The sign is covered currently by plasterboard.



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



Detached house at no. 14 with charming cottage like Victorian frontage (google maps)



23- 31 Baker Street, iconic Alexandra Terrace, c.1850-1870, simple, honest red brick terrace, fairly-well preserved with largely all original windows and doors intact

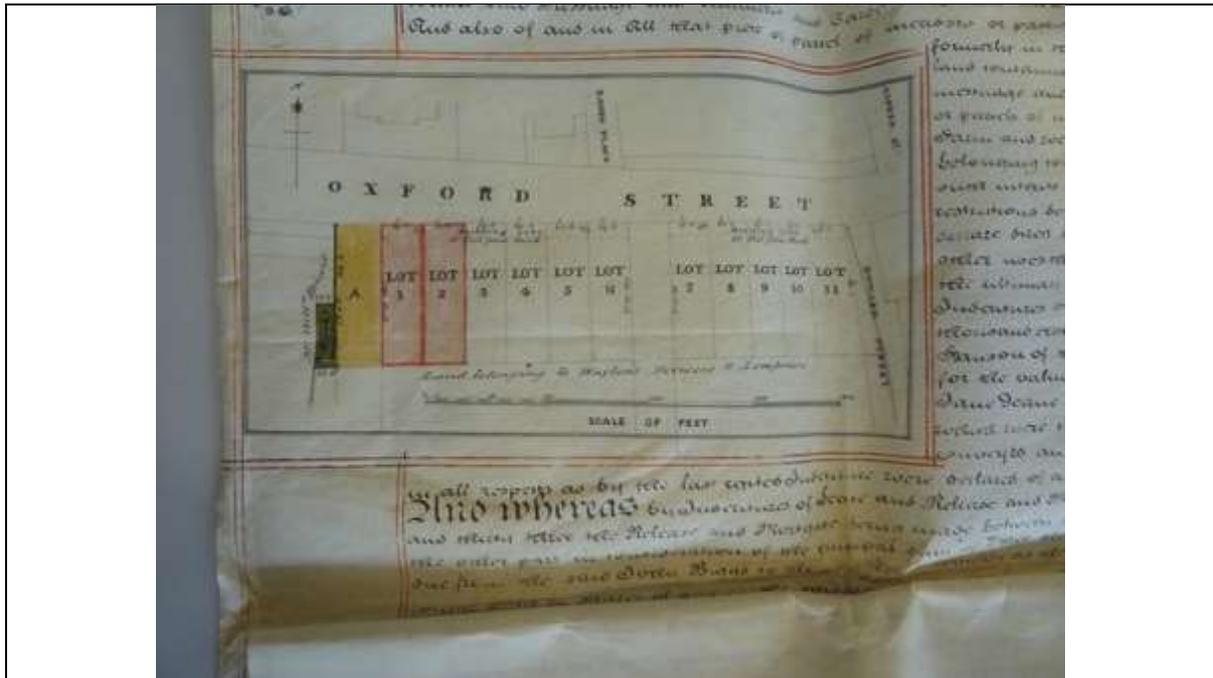


Ferguson's Pale Ale, Stouts & Porter, Wine & Spirits sign upstairs at the Oasis Community Centre



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

In the 1830s (BRO), a sale of the market gardening area of "Mrs. Zinzan's fields" was agreed that led to the development of both Waylen Street and Zinzan Street. The two streets were laid in between Russell Street and Howard Street. Housing began in earnest after the roads were created and by the early 1850s the entirety of Zinzan Street was developed and most of the south end of Waylen Street had also been terraced, built to house some of Reading's more successful business families. Smaller than the Russell Street houses, they were still largely substantial 3 story family homes but they were more modest than the grander Castle Street and Russell Street Georgian villas. The wealthiest of Reading's citizens had begun to develop in other sections of the town by this time.



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



Frontages along Waylen Street's earliest houses c 1840



The large terraces along Zinzan Street with its poor condition evidenced. 26 Zinzan Street to the left is the only house with its original windows intact, still in use as a single family house

Sadly, today, it is the houses of Zinzan Street and Waylen Street, whilst modestly grand 3 story terraces with basements in the majority, that are most alluring in size and scale for HMO development, and as a result, they suffer some of the worst degradation in the area because of this. The turning over of houses to multiple occupation is perhaps felt most strongly on these two streets. Overhead wires leading to multiple occupation properties, excessive satellite dishes and front gardens turned over to hard-standings for rubbish bins and the absence of greenery along the streets create bleak urban landscapes in front of pre- 1850 Victorian terraces. Many of the properties on both streets have had their brick façades unsympathetically painted over and several have been resurfaced entirely. Many front brick walls onto the pavement have also disappeared, creating uneven frontage lines along the pavement.

Along Zinzan Street, the regular appearance of the 3 story houses is virtually unbroken with only slight variations of poorly constructed dormer windows and the occasional two story terraced set between them. There are still about 8 or so houses which have retained at least partial attractive Victorian iron railings at nos 19, 23, 39, and 43. Nos 43 and 40- to 48. Nos 39 and 45 still have the original curved entrance dividing walls that separated the front

gardens. 26 Zinzan Street, a later build property (built between 1853 and c 1870), although it has lost its original iron railings, it is the only house on the street that still retains its original windows, door, a great number of interior original features and is still used as a single family house. A dropped curved granite kerb outside 8- 10 Zinzan Street still shows evidence from the mid 1800's of a coach entrance there at use until at least c1910.

Waylen Street has more variety in its housing stock, with houses varying from 2 to 3 stories in height. The large villa on the west side at no. 16 is an attractive oddity in the street. The terrace from 5 to 15 along with the east side near Oxford Road, is a notable faux Tudor stand with many original doors and elements, although sadly in poor condition. The remainder of the street struggles with the overall very poor condition of some of the properties which drag the entire street down. The small two up- two down houses from 21- 27 provide the relief of well-tended properties, with the façade of 21 refaced in yellow stone, is a regrettable visual intrusion on the street. The unfortunate Marlon housing development on the east side of the street at the Oxford Road replaced the once mighty façade of the Methodist Church.



Waylen Street, current site of Marion Housing development which replaced the former Methodist Chapel being demolished, c.1980s

The remaining housing in the area was largely completed in the latter half of the 19c. The homes on Jesse Terrace were created by the near-by Jesse family in groups of approximately four or a time, with only the earliest group (nos. 1-13) being in place prior to 1853. The Terrace was largely completed by the mid 1870s and there are subtle differences in the builds of each of the "groups" that are notable to this day. The largely single family homes with well-tended front gardens in front of the charming concave metal veranda fronts, contribute a well-loved charm factor to the street and the street sadly sits as a very attractive island with much degradation around it to its south.



the view up Jesse Terrace from Baker Street to Castle Hill

A close-up of the centre of the east terrace, Jesse Terrace

Carey Street began its life as Tappenden Street. After the Carey Particular Baptist Chapel was built in 1869, in 1871 the church petitioned the Council for the name change of the street after the name of the Church. The church was named after an early prominent missionary admired by many of the church members, but without a significant link to

Reading. Houses along that street were largely filled in along the east side of the street by the 1870s, some having notable polychrome brick detailing.



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

Anstey Road and Body Road were created at the turn of the 20c on open land of the Carey Particular Baptist Chapel and the houses were well established along the western side of Anstey at that time. An older terrace of houses facing east into an area called Pine Court (where the present day, Carey Centre and the Salvation Army are situated) was likely poor Victorian habitation for local factory workers at the nearby Coach Manufactory. Those were cleared out and removed only in second half of the 20c for the development of the two modern sites: the Carey Centre and the Salvation Army. Many residents consider the two modern structures to be intrusions that are "unattractive" and "harmful to the appearance of the area." However, it must be noted positively, the green value that the Carey Centre contributes to the area, something that would be highly desirable to retain in the event of any redevelopment as it does give the area a charming, green and open feel with the houses facing it in the centre.



**The open centre area of Anstey Street and Body Road,
with decent green amenity provided by the Carey Centre**



**View towards Holy Trinity Church from Russell Street
with the Caversham hills and its escarpment**



**The back of Mr. Swallow's home and brick privacy walls
with its stunning collection of chimneys (google maps)**

Character Area

Russell Street and streets east

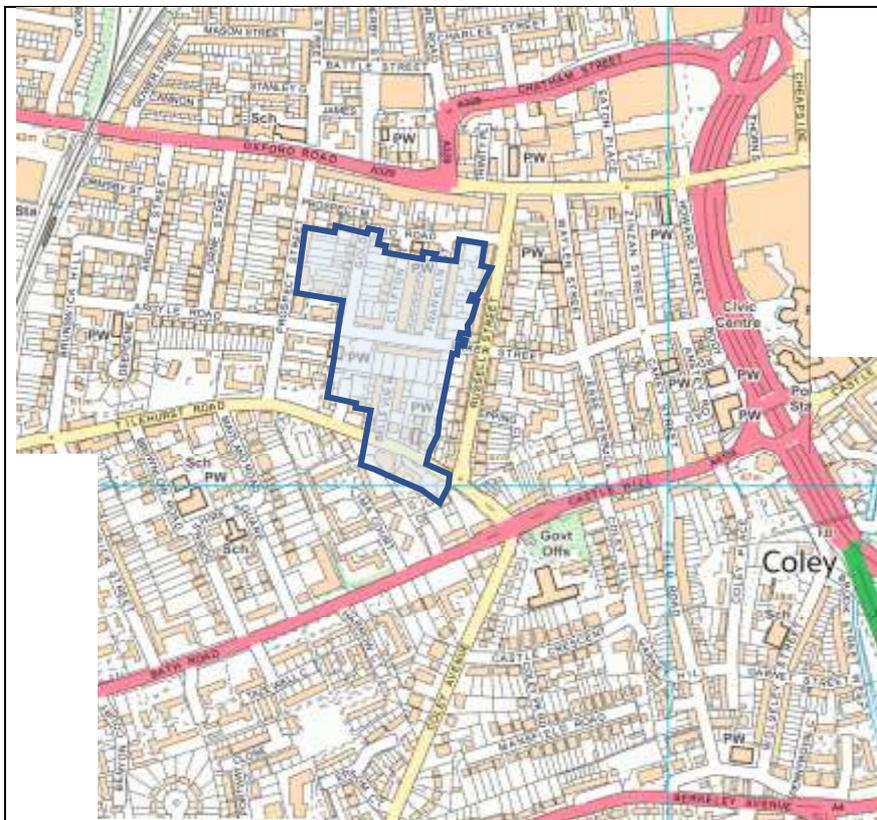
Positive Features:

- Jesse Terrace – a very attractive, well- tended to street in the Conservation Area, an island in a sea of degradation
- Georgian terraces west side of Russell Street- red brick
- Georgian Bath stone villa at no. 48-50
- Henry "Fox" Talbot's studio at 55 Baker Street
- Understanding of the historical layout of infill streets
- Original wrought iron railings at 16-22 Howard Street
- Alexandra Terrace at 23-31 Baker Street-
- Oasis Community Centre at corner of Baker Street and Carey Street
- Rednirt Villas, Baker Street
- Carey Baptist Church
- Nag's Head pub, late Victorian mock- Tudor, CAMRA winning pub, Asset of Community Value
- Parsonage at 34 Russell Street

Negative Features:

- Over-all bleak feel to the area, driven down by the condition of a few streets
- Lack of green provision in the area
- ASB and crime pervasive in the area, inclusive of drug dealing
- Poor condition of housing stock, most notably on Zinzan Street, Waylen Street, Howard street and to a lesser degree on the north end of Russell Street, Howard Street, Anstey Road, Body Road
- Poor condition of the public realm- with excessive and redundant over-head wires, excessive signage, tarmacked pavements
- Excessive estate agent signage
- Poor definition of frontages to pavement with removal of front railings and brick walls
- Bin landings and hard standings in front gardens
- Excessive quantities of bins, especially bad on Waylen Street where bins are out on pavements and over- flowing
- Satellite dish proliferation and excessive and redundant wires on fronts of houses
- uPVC windows and non- traditional modern doors
- over -painted brick, some in very loud non- traditional colours esp. on Howard Street
- egregious front façades at 21 Waylen Street and 8 Howard Street
- poorly developed land between Russell Street and Waylen Street north of Baker Street, frequently site for ASB and drugs
- Walford Hall- out- of character modern building
- Poor condition of 5-15 Waylen Street, a large attractive Victorian mock Tudor stand of houses
- Egregious new build back of 139-141 Oxford Road
- Signage and overflow of garage business at 81 Oxford Road
- Poor tarmacked pavements contributing little visual charm to area

New red tile roof at 10 Body Road



Character Area west of Russell Street to Prospect Street

Local resident, Mr. William Pratt Swallow, used the area west of Russell Street for his market gardening enterprise, in the 18c and early 19c. However, in the first decades of the 19c, he began to turn the area over for housing likely realising there was more money to be had from this new market. Mr. Swallow then “founded” Prospect Street and Russell Street in these first decades, and he laid Russell Street in on the eastern boundary of his market gardening area. Baker Street was also continued west of Russell Street during this time. Housing went in first along the south side of Baker Street.

The stand of listed Georgian terraced housing on the south side of Baker Street (nos. 61-79) c.1820s, was part of this development. The terrace is extremely well cared for with original windows and doors on the properties and is a credit to the area. The relatively new iron railings at number 69 are exact copies of the railings that existed all along the terrace when it was built.

The National Spiritualist Church at 81 Baker Street was also built at this time as one of three villas with entrances that faced away from Baker Street, with drives up to the fronts of the houses and their gardens surrounding them set back of the street. The Spiritualist Church which was known as York Lodge and the other two were called the Lancaster and Tudor Lodges, which much later met their demise with the modern need for more housing in the form of the large expansive flats of Alexander and Nicholas Courts.



The stand of 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, an early 19c set of three villas built with façades not facing Baker Street but into their front gardens

Additionally, there was development along the east side of Prospect Street from the Oxford Road up to Baker Street. The charming two-up two-down late Georgian cottage style terraces nos. 1-9, show how the more working class person lived in the first half of the 19c along with the greatly compromised Prospect Mews that sits behind the grand terraces of the Oxford Road. Like the small Mews properties in Prospect Mews, two of the houses at 5 and 9 are also stuccoed. The house at 9 Prospect Street, still has the original fanlight and windows, along with many original interior features and is in use as a single family residence. The much larger houses from 11- 23, along the east side of Prospect Street between Baker and the Oxford Road, were also built prior to 1853 with the highlighted. Sadly, despite its very early history Prospect Street at this section is subject to low levels of crime and the majority of the houses are used as HMOs and poorly cared for. The street into the Mews still has a good expanse of stone pavement, although the business at the back and the general condition of the area is poor. An alley behind 1-9 Prospect Street is entirely overgrown.



1-9 Prospect Street, humble Georgians in poor repair



Prospect Mews, mews houses

Answering the housing needs that Reading had at the latter part of the 19c, larger estates began to be sold off, for the establishment of housing for the more common working family man of Reading. Bellevue villa remains on Tilehurst (operating presently as a B&B) with original windows and set atop its frontage are two Regency style decorative urns. However, it was deemed to be profitable to sell off its western gardens which were used to develop Belle Vue Road, a small two-up, two-down terraced polychrome housing lined the road by the 1890s. Belle Vue Road is notable for its quaint, charming mirrored terraced housing. There are still several properties with original windows along the road, but sadly some of the facades have been repainted destroying the running polychrome prospective down the street. The doors have attractive stone- carved entrances and the effect of the street is rather like a small enclave. There is still a fine high wall down the east side of Belle Vue Road that would have given privacy to Bellevue House from this new development. A unique patch of pavement exists at the very bottom of the road with several square metres of fan pattern sett stones still showing.



Belle Vue Road, (c1880-90) small polychrome terrace with high wall separating the development from the original Bellevue House



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

The interior area created between the Oxford Road and Baker Street, Prospect Street to Russell Street was left open divided into four plots surrounded by an inner road on its north and west sides that went along the backs of the houses on the Oxford Road and Prospect Street by the name of Junction Road (today's Goldsmid Street). Ghost signage directing the visitor to the street and Westfield Grove still remains at the corner of Russell Street and Goldsmid Road. One larger house and its gardens by the name of Westfield Grove stood in the southeast quadrant of the four plots with extensive gardens to the rear and the house facing Baker Street. Following the same precedent set at Bellevue, Westfield Grove sold off its land and the house was felled to make way for Clifton Street and Franklin Street and similar – although not quite as small, terraced housing was completed by the first decade of the 20c.

Two terraces were created back to back along the west side of Franklin Street and the east side of Clifton Street. An alley, that is still largely in existence today, was placed at the back

of the properties for rear access. Both sets of terraces have charming polychrome frontages. Clifton Street has the same stone entrance door work overheard as Belle Vue Road suggesting that the same developer was used, or possibly the same pattern book. Diamond shaped designs in polychrome along Franklin Street were patterned between the houses to join and unify the entire terrace. Egregious over-painting of some of the properties' façades, have destroyed being able to appreciate the full effect of this linear patterning along these frontages.

These streets are exemplary of the style of terraced housing that took off rapidly along the residential streets off of the Oxford Road further to the west, and signify this westward movement in the town for the development of much needed housing for the many persons that worked in local industries.

The stand of terraced houses from 36-48 on the north side of Baker Street between Clifton Street and Goldsmid Road, are grand 3 story terraced houses, were built c 1880-90s, prior to the terraces of Clifton and Franklin. However, the terrace is greatly maligned with universal uPVC windows, satellite dishes, painting of trims, very poor maintenance at 48, and the painting and dropped kerb at 46.



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

The listed Reading Synagogue, at the bottom of Clifton at Goldsmid Road built c. 1900, shines as a unique Moorish design in fine polychrome brickwork and stone and is the only purpose –built synagogue in Berkshire. The small wooden bell-tower topped with lead sits proudly on the roof of the synagogue and is charmingly unique. At the bend in Goldsmid Road is a large oak (TPO) that forms an attractive corner for the street.



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



Large TPO oak at the corner of Goldsmid Road

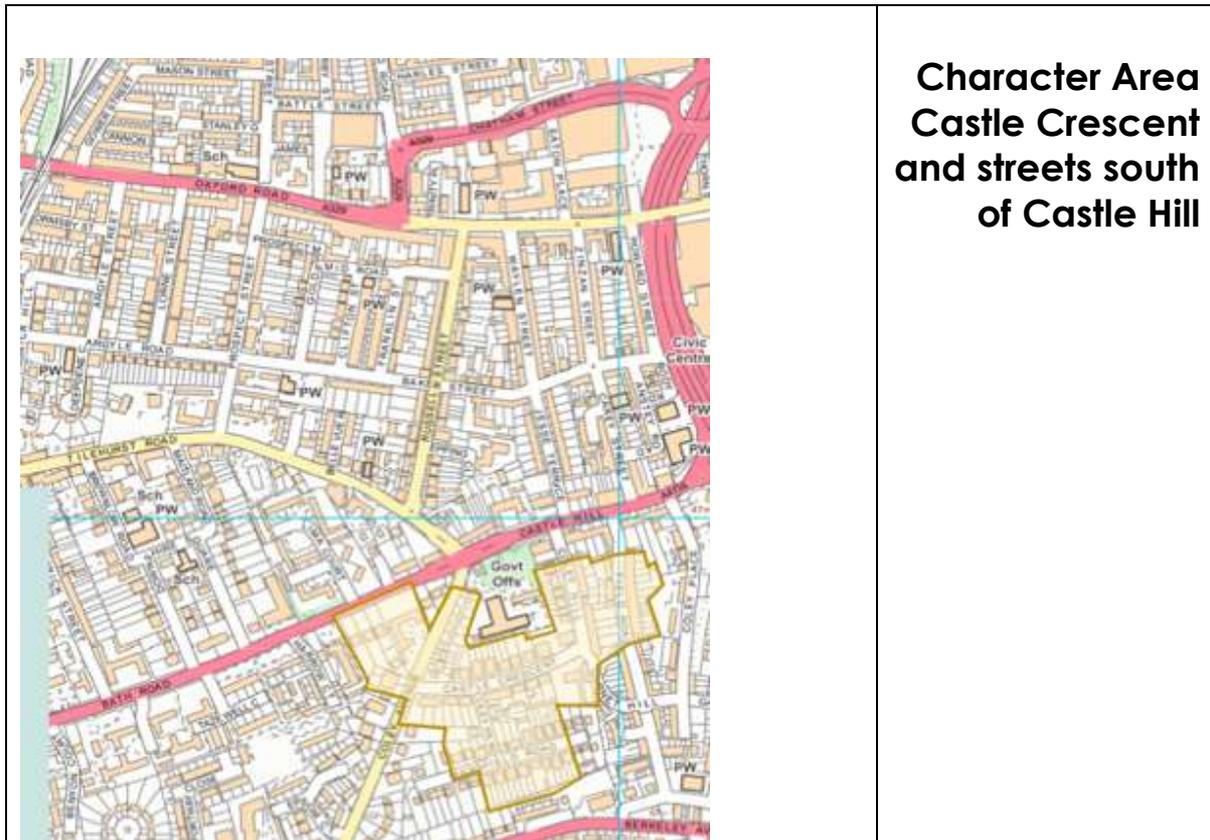
Character Area west of Russell Street to Prospect Street

Positive Features:

- Synagogue at Goldsmid and Carey Street
- Baker Street Terrace at 61-79, listed and in fine condition, reproduction of original railings as no 69
- National Spiritualist Church at 81 Baker Street and its front garden
- Polychrome houses with patterning of Clifton Street and Franklin Street
- Belle Vue Road with its enclave feel and patch of sett stone road at the end
- TPO large Oak tree at the bend of Goldsmid Road
- 3 original gas light poles – 2 on Goldsmid and 1 on Franklin Street
- Georgian workingman's houses at 1-9 Prospect Street and at Prospect Mews
- High brick walls behind 36-48 Baker Street
- Original alley behind Clifton Street and Franklin Street polychrome houses
- View to the Caversham escarpment from Baker Street down Clifton Street and Franklin Street

Negative Features:

- Modern synagogue Hall
- Overpainting of some polychrome houses destroying patterning down street
- Poor condition of 1-9 Prospect Street and heavy ASB in the immediate area
- Poor condition of 48 Baker Street and over- painting at no. 46
- Lack of green provision in area
- Overhead wires blighting view to Caversham
- Poor tarmacked pavements and poor condition of street



**Character Area
Castle Crescent
and streets south
of Castle Hill**

The residential houses of the Castle Crescent area are very mixed in appearance, period, massing and height with a wide range from Georgian to late Victorian and Edwardian villas dotted with some unfortunate late 20c infill. However, each street has a distinctive dominant

residential style to it, and in spite of this disparity the area hangs together well. This is also a result of its geographical location being high up from the river beds to the south and being somewhat tucked away from the centre of town with its primary access to the town being along Castle Hill and Castle Crescent.

The area is entirely given to residential properties with the sole exceptions of light executive flat property use along Castle Crescent and the B&B at the corner of Castle Crescent and Coley Avenue.

The oldest route of the character area is Coley Avenue which at one time, carried the traveller off to the sizeable Coley Manor to the south of the conservation area, beyond Berkley Avenue. With its impressive allée of trees in place from the late 18c on either side and with old, attractive high brick walls on the west side and set back housing, the street provides a striking and historic view from the Castle Hill/Coley Avenue/Russell Street intersection. To the east of this Avenue and south of Castle Hill/Castle Street were of the remains of the civil war fortifications, nurseries and a bleaching ground.



The striking 220 plus year old allée of trees along Coley Avenue that once lead to Coley manor with old high brick walls, looking north into the conservation area from Castle Crescent



An old postcard showing the former griffins at the entrance to Coley Avenue looking south from the intersection

Coley Hill was the next street in place with Georgian housing built along the east side of the street facing west c 1820-30s. The building along this street followed along with the development along Castle Street at the time, and the houses faced the back side of the grand Yeomanry House and its large gardens facing Castle Street and the intersection of some of Reading's wealthiest housing at the time. The terrace of 2-3 storey listed buildings, are predominantly brick, with the occasional stucco front and front stucco at 31- 35. There are many with original railings, many original arched Georgian windows and doors still intact making this side of the street very attractive. As there is becoming a greater preponderance of HMO type housing on the street, however, continued vigilance needs to be paid to continue to keep these original details intact. There is a lone more modern small two story detached house in the centre of these terraces that is disruptive to the overall appearance of the terrace but as it is well-kept it is not wholly detracting to the east side.

The modern infill on the west side of the street, is overall not in keeping with the Georgian side, and improvement with redevelopment of some of these houses could benefit the street enormously. The houses with front garden parking are particular detractors along the street. The view out over the Katesgrove area, from the corner of Coley Hill and Castle Crescent as the road descends Garnet Hill, with its two church spires is notable and one that should be preserved.



**31-35 Coley Hill looking north,
with the Georgian terrace to the right c 1820-30s**



**Arch windows and fanlights on two storey
Georgians, Coley Hill**

Castle Crescent was built with several houses dotted the south side of that street c.1840, notably the now derelict 3 Castle Crescent (likely c. 1835- 1840) with its sizeable gardens still in existence today. It currently remains as one of the only four substantial detached villas in the Conservation Area with their grounds intact surrounding them. Its active planning permission to refurbish the manor house and to add more housing along its side to the eastern perimeter along Garnet Hill will challenge the understanding of the garden layout somewhat. This property has a number of TPO trees dotting its western perimeter to the back,



The derelict 3 Castle Crescent c 1840



**stucco c 1840 3 storey houses along the south
side of Castle Crescent**

The remaining houses along Castle Crescent and along Mansfield Road for which the area is predominantly recognised, were built largely in the in the last two decades of the 19c to 1900. They are notable for their size and polychrome, stone, and tile embellishment. The front gardens given way to parking are unfortunate but the overall upkeep of the properties is good and the area has a grand appearance. Many are in multiple occupation but are overall discreet. Coley Park Road joining Mansfield Road to Castle Crescent has nice older large red brick walls along it, but some modern villas, that at least match the area in massing with allusions to local detailing and brick working in their favour. The good older tall and lower brick walls along Coley Avenue, Castle Crescent, Mansfield Road and along Coley Park Road give the area a nice well- kept appearance.

There are three houses along the Bath Road that were incorporated into the Conservation Area in the 2004 appraisal, and have a similar appearance well set- back from the road, with some striking TPO trees in their front gardens. These replaced former Georgian villas. The listed building on the southern side of Castle Crescent with the section facing onto Coley Avenue and functioning as a B&B, is sadly poorly kept. The 20c Berkeley Court is set well back in an attractively kept garden. Newer windows detract from its otherwise well designed mid 20c appearance.



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 20c Berkeley Court, Coley Avenue

It is in the consideration of this appraisal to consider the continued protection that this area enjoys by remaining within the Russell Street/ Castle Hill Conservation Area. Certain extensions to this character area are thought to be essential in protecting the over- all flavour of this area. However, it is also proposed that this area is one that is considerably different in appearance and significance from the area to its north which comprises the larger Conservation Area. It is the recommendation of this appraisal, that this character area, when possible, be sectioned off of this original Conservation Area and incorporated into a new Conservation Area comprising of the area listed here adding in the streets of Garnet hill , down Wolesley Street and towards the Holy Brook. Until which time such a proposal would be undertaken, the character area is suggested to remain in this Conservation Area where it can best be served to retain its historical significance.

Materials: There is a wide variety of materials in the area. Red brick is dominant along Coley Avenue (new and old build and tall walls) and in the late Georgians of Coley Hill . Polychrome brick in greys, blues, tans and reds in late Victorian /Edwardian villas pepper the area especially along the north side of Castle Crescent, Mansfield Road and Field Road. Stucco is more dominant along the southern, older side of Castle Crescent. Stone detailing doors and window cills are common. Modern infill in the area is often stucco and red brick combinations.

Streetscape and furniture: There are still a few remaining mid 20c smaller goose neck light poles in the area along Castle Crescent. Tarmacked pavements and streets detract from the area. There are sections of bricked street guttering remaining along Coley Hill. The street furniture and overhead wires are very rudimentary, uneven and excessive in spots. Overhead wires everywhere detract from the overall skyline. Rubbish bins lining Coley Hill and Field Road are detrimental to the character of the area and the appearance of the properties.

Positive features:

- The villas of Castle Crescent and Mansfield Road c 1880-1900
- The Georgian terraced housing along Coley Hill
- The historical allée of trees and brick walls along Coley Avenue
- The view over Katesgrove from the corner of Coley Hill and Castel Crescent
- The fairly well maintained polychrome terrace on the east side of Field Road

- Notable older brick walls around the area , both tall boundary walls and lower frontage walls
- The large trees (TPOs) in front of the late Victorian villas at 3-7 Bath Road
- The mid 20c Berkeley Court

Negative features:

- Modern development along the west sides of Field Road and Coley Hill
- Tarmacked pavements throughout the area.
- Poor street lighting, erratically placed street furniture
- Lack of green along Field Road, and to a lesser degree along Castle Crescent and Mansfield Road
- 19 Coley Hill- a regrettable modern house in the middle of Georgian terraces
- Poor quality front garden boundaries (excessive bins at 23) and HMO like appearances at 3 and 5 Coley Hill
- Bins in front gardens of the polychrome terraced side of Field Road
- Loss of front gardens for parking especially along Castle Crescent and Mansfield Road
- The poor state of 3 Castle Crescent and its current plans to add housing provision along the side which will dwarf the original building and alter the original front carriage area and entrance
- Excessive and redundant overhead wires from telegraph poles radiating to houses in area
- Loss of original slate roofs and chimneys, original doors and windows to uPVC windows and doors along Field Road
- Condition of the listed building and its grounds at 35 Castle Crescent in use as a B&B

Negative Features, Issues and Vulnerabilities

Negative Features

Certain portions of the Russell Street Castle Hill Conservation Area have been plagued by a poor local reputation in terms of condition for many years now. On many levels, to a lesser degree, many of these situations were in evidence at the appraisal in 2004. Whilst some portions of the conservation area are well maintained, there are many more areas where the condition of the housing stock, retail stores and the public realm, are causing substantial harm in the readability of the historic fabric of the area and the appreciation of the area as a Conservation Area overall. This is particularly unfortunate, as the Conservation Area was one of the first three conservation areas created in Reading in the early 1970's, thus affirming a high level of importance to the town and the community.

Issues and Vulnerabilities

Local Economy and Area Specific Factors

The degradation of the building stock and the public realm was noted at the last appraisal in 2004 and the situation continues to have its hold on the area today.

The busy, Oxford Road climate with its associated crime, ASB and overall poor condition of retail units has negatively bled into the residential streets to the south that feed off it (notably the streets from Russell Street to Howard Street). This criminality has involved persistent drug-dealing, prostitution, street drinking and graffiti that have created a "second tier lifestyle" in the area. This is fueled by high quantities of off-licenses that continue to have an overall negative influence on the retail climate along the Oxford Road. This undercurrent of criminality challenges the establishment of a more positive retail climate along the Oxford Road which would also improve the residential climate in the area as well. Reduction of the

crime and ASB could fuel the return of more primary single-family homeowners that would have a more vested interest in the improvement and maintenance of the area.

With its proximity to the town centre and the railway station, and the arrival of Cross Rail c 2020, the area is highly alluring for the acquisition of housing stock by buy-to-let and absentee landlords looking to extract quick money by doing low- cost renovations on many of the large houses in the area. These frequently poor quality HMO and rental conversions make for an overall low cost rental housing stock in certain streets that are key targets for investors. This has in turn created a high turnover population, looking for low rents, with residents that frequently have little regard or buy-in to the area. This constant surge of new residents creates great wear and tear on the properties and on the streets.

There are a handful of streets off the Oxford Road where there are estimated to be between only one to five single-residency households left. This has created an imbalance of the local neighbourhoods, that have left single family homes "islands in a sea of flats". Without future Article 4s being placed on the area in the future to control the number of conversions, or to allow conversions to be damaging to the appearance of the conservation area, this trend is expected to continue and to further degrade the area. The Government's 2015 ruling to limit mortgage interest tax relief for buy- to- let investing has not been seen to slow down this type of investment activity in the area that has been the causal agent of so much degradation.

The on-going ASB and criminality along the Oxford Road continues to feed negatively into the area. With continued reduction and cutbacks to the policing forces, the situation is expected to continue or worsen in the intervening years until the next appraisal. This will only work to maintain the perceived "challenged" reputation of the area, and to continue to keep the area undesirable for single family investors to restore a more even neighbourhood balance in the area, which could benefit the area greatly in the future.

Since the last appraisal in 2004, the economic outlook for Reading has been very positive and this has only fueled the market with significant increases in prices for the past years, especially since the announcement of Cross Rail to the town. While more modern out-lying suburbs and new builds attract new residents, this area, with its extremely convenient location to the town centre, continues to make the area a popular one for renters and thus buy-to-let investing for renters that cannot afford the fancy, newer suburban settings.

Policy and Government Cutback Issues affecting conservation areas

Since the last appraisal in 2004, permitted development rights within conservation areas have been relaxed, most notably with the revocation of Conservation Area Consent and the introduction of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act of 2013. This has hastened some types of regrettable conversions to properties no longer requiring planning permission, most notably in the disappearance of brick walls along pavements under one metre in height and the creation of hard- standing areas in front gardens for ease of access to rubbish bins. This relaxation of rulings has caused a significant amount of blighting in the area in recent years.

Due to government cutbacks, the LPA has been forced to reduce staffing of the Council's Planning Department and this has unfortunately exacerbated the problems of the ability to follow up on enforcements or to feel able to create new Article 4s even where they may well be warranted. This leaves conservation areas vulnerable in upcoming years in the areas of development and protection. A number of listed building infractions in the Conservation Area with items such as replacement windows, remain on the enforcement docket which are proving impossible to pursue with insufficient staff. As the Council's other priorities must be chosen above dealing with these infractions, the amount of egregious conversions and loss of detail in the conservation area continues to mount, each time affecting details that detract from the over- all readability and enjoyment of the Conservation Area.

Additionally, the LPA has been forced, like many other authorities, to become more “risk adverse” in challenging planning applications, especially in the area of appropriate design of brownfield sites or in extensions that can be harmful to the conservation area. This has opened up the greater possibility that some developments considered marginally passable are approved out of financial concerns with having to mount the cost of handling an appeal should a ruling be challenged.

Finally, as observed from the well- placed Article 4s in Jesse Terrace, there is little doubt that Article 4 Directions put in place in other parts of this conservation area would begin to make a difference. It is unfortunate that Reading Borough Council has been forced to follow the course of many other councils in the country by not implementing Article 4 Directions to avert problems in conservation areas when they arise, even where evidence is overwhelming in favour of their creation. This is likely to continue as a very real challenge in the placing of Article 4s in this area despite the prescient need for them.

Recommended measures/ Opportunities for Enhancement

Long term/Big Picture recommendations

Recommended change of name to the Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area and recommended eventual removal of the Castle Crescent Character Area to a new Conservation Area in the south

Conservation area name change

An Appraisal evaluates the situation of a conservation area at its present point in time with part of those considerations involve boundary changes, the overall situation of the area itself and importantly, the re-evaluation of character areas that make up the conservation area. Careful evaluation has been made of all five of the distinct character areas at this time and the expanded evaluations of those character areas are included in this document.

The recommendation for a renaming of the conservation area is part of a big picture concept that stands to significantly benefit the Conservation Area and its management in the long term. Historic England advises that areas deemed conservation areas are best benefitted by being small in scale in order properly allow for the focus on the unique specialness of that area. It is therefore reasonable to consider ways in the future, a reduction of the size of the Conservation Area could be realistic. An initial step in that would be in a name change that would help to better define the area itself.

The justification behind the recommendation for a name change to the Castle Hill Oxford Road conservation area is discussed more fully on page 21-22.

Castle Crescent character area

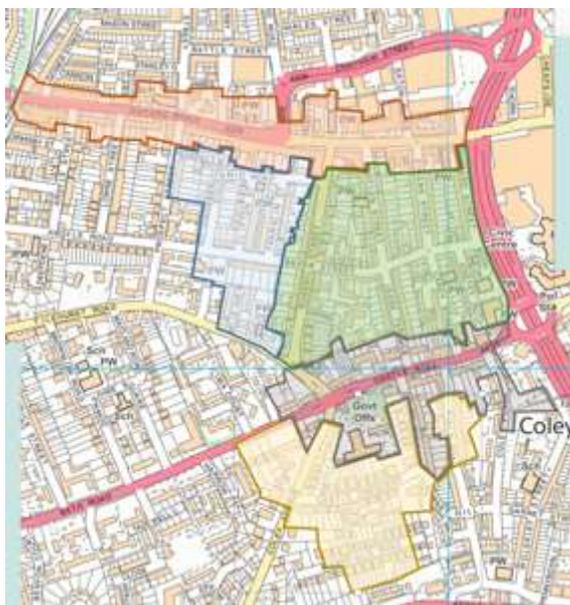
The Castle Crescent character area has the most diversified streetscape of all of the character areas in the conservation area. The proposal of the addition of the villas in Mansfield Road which lie to the south of Castle Crescent is well warranted in being able to accurately portray the story of that period of residential expansion south of Castle Hill c1890 to 1910.

However, it is clear that given the current size of the conservation area, that a certain portion of the conservation area should ideally be taken away and protected by other means other than under the umbrella of this particular conservation area. it is easiest to see on a map the most logical area to remove from this conservation area would it be the character area to

the south of Castle Hill. In doing so, the focus of this conservation area becomes entirely about the two main arteries and the buildup of the residential properties between the two.

The value of the Castle Crescent character area can be seen to relate well to the area to the south east of it, in the Garnet Hill area as the residential build up above the Holybrook riverbed relates well geographically with the Castle Crescent/ Mansfield Road above it. Additionally, the Coley Avenue 200 plus year old allée of trees that runs clear to Berkley Avenue at its south end, could be easily incorporated into a new conservation area inclusive of the Garnet Hill area to the east. This will be a smaller conservation area and one much more manageable and in-line with Historic England guidelines regarding the size of a conservation area.

Until that time, there is no reason why this character area should not currently remain within the protection of this conservation area in order to retain protection of the historical fabric and significant character that defines the area.



Currently proposed Conservation Area boundary lines with defined character areas



Proposed future boundary lines of that area with the Castle Crescent character area removed

Article 4 expansion

In the 2004 appraisal, it was discussed and recommended that “permitted development rights [should be] withdrawn” for the family homes in Jesse Terrace and an Article 4 should be created for the area protecting historic features. The proposals were to limit exterior alterations for all of the family dwelling houses along the Terrace. This exterior specific Article 4 Direction was put in place in 2005. With little notable damage to the street since the last appraisal, the effect of this initial Article 4 Direction on Jesse Terrace can be considered highly successful.

In 2017, a second Article 4 requiring HMO developments on the street to gain planning permission, went into effect on Jesse Terrace after noting the arrival of 2 HMO's on the street, which threatened the single family balance of the street. Whilst the effect of the first Article 4 has been evident, the effect of the second article 4 has yet to be tested. Such an Article 4 applied in the Redlands and University area c2015 has been proven to significantly reduce the number of HMO applications in the area and has caused at least one known estate

agent looking to invest in the buy- to-let market, to leave that area and move its focus to this conservation area.

It is regrettable that an Article 4 protection was created solely on Jesse Terrace as evidenced by the continued increase of low cost, poorly maintained multiple-occupancy residences in the area and the negative contributions the Oxford Road's well-documented crime and ASB has on the area in terms of reduced desirability for all but the lower income, transient rental market. The Jesse Terrace Article 4 essentially created Jesse Terrace as "an island in a sea" of substantial and continuing degradation, notable by locals to have increased since the 2004 appraisal.

It has been suggested on multiple occasions by local community organisations such as the Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association (BSANA) and the Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) that Reading Borough Council, in its obligation to pay special attention to the desirability to the protection and enhancement of the Conservation Area, should utilise the powers of Article 4 protections throughout the area. Regrettably, with government cuts to the LPA, the ability to place an article 4 direction over the area and manage that effectively is greatly hampered. Despite this, an Article 4 remains the Government's best tool in management of conservation area development and harm, and it is the recommendation of this appraisal to ask for the application of multiple Article 4 directions over the area to control not only further HMO development but also to slow and eventually reverse the degradation to the historic fabric of the homes and residences in the area.

The blighting effects of conversions in the area can be visually seen in the degradation of historic fabric and in the loss of detailing to many properties but it is also worth noting the effect of increased multiple occupancy properties on the community balance, changing the face of the area originally created largely for single family living, to an area that has been termed as a "sea of HMOs". This is a double –edged sword, as noted well in the 2004 appraisal where it advised:

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 appraisal will provide a framework for a positive partnership for mutual future benefit.

The positive contribution of new community groups interested in the improvement of the conservation area is encouraging, however, the make-up of these groups can be challenged by a lack of membership with an ever –decreasing number of primary home property owners, which comprises largely the membership of these groups.

Article 4s affecting both the control over quantities of HMOs are recommended, as well as Article 4s that control the conversions and appearance of residences and store fronts in the area.

Relating to the visual appearance of the area, it is proposed that restrictions should relate to development visible from the public highway inclusive of footpaths. This should affect both single family and multiple occupancy buildings as well as retail units to maintain and over time improve the appearance of properties in the area.

The kinds of work which should be controlled in an Article 4 in this conservation area include the same as recommended in the 2004 appraisal for implementation on Jesse Terrace and should consider:

- The installation of new windows and doors not in keeping the original property appearance
- Alterations to the roof including changing roof materials, Creating dormer windows and the installation of roof lights
- Building of a porch
- The erection of hard standings
- Erection or alteration of gates fences or walls
- Creating a direct access onto the road/ dropped kerbs
- Painting of the exterior of building

As well as in terms of the Oxford Road:

- controls over the appearance of store fronts and signage
- controls over extensions and uses of pavements

Article 4s are also warranted and are recommended to be put in place to limit the creation of additional HMOs (C3 and C4 conversions). In noting again, the implementation of the Article 4 Direction placed over the Redlands Conservation Area in 2015, that direction called for planning application approval in the creation of HMOs within a 50 metre radius of any property being considered for conversion. In this conservation area, however, such a restriction would be of no use, as due to the already high level of HMO proliferation in the area, it is highly unlikely, especially on the streets nearest to the Oxford Road to find any 50 metre radius where there is not already an HMO in existence. At least for those streets most affected, the recommendation for distance is needed to be considerably smaller, or indeed to simply require any conversion to an HMO to be automatically required to seek planning application approval on certain streets.

Historic England Heritage at Risk Listing, Conservation Area Management Plan and involvement of Community Volunteers

“At Risk” listing recommendation

The cumulative effect of the blight in the area has been to detract from the special character of the area and indeed threaten its survival at least in its present form or to be enhanced for the future. Much consideration has been given in this appraisal to the possibility of removing certain streets from the conservation area entirely as there has been continued deterioration in the area since the last appraisal that have marginally tipped certain streets over to a point of no appreciable return. This, however, was judged to be in the bigger picture of a substantial plan to secure the future of this conservation area, to not be a positive step forward.

Instead, the concept to retain the current boundary lines of the conservation area and to extend those boundaries where they are deemed to be of importance in the legibility of the area as a whole, makes the most sense. This allows the entire area to be focused upon as a “one entity” and to look upon a “holistic cure” for the entire area.

Placing the area on the “Heritage at Risk” listing is an essential building block to creating a platform to improve the area. Once such designation is in place, funding can be found for the most dire areas, and a management plan for improvement of other portions of the conservation area can be initiated and acted upon. It is, however, the act of formally acknowledging and placing the conservation area on the “At Risk” register that will provide the necessary fuel for actions to begin to take shape and happen.

In 2016, BSANA engaged with other local groups, Reading Borough Council Councillors and Officers and Historic England to discuss conservation area issues within Reading. At the time, a discussion of the advantages of placing this Conservation Area on the national Heritage at Risk register was had. Historic England advised that such an action could indeed be a positive step forward to help reverse the tide of damage to the conservation area and in turn protect and ultimately enhance the asset. The possibility for funding to improve the public realm, the Oxford Road and other issues within the conservation area was advised to be best achievable, only if the conservation area were to be listed on the "At Risk" register.

It is therefore the recommendation of this reappraisal, given the studied condition of the area, and its lack of substantial improvement since the last appraisal in 2004, that this Conservation Area be included on this list at the earliest possible opportunity.

Management Plan

The involvement of an engaged community and local volunteers is an essential component in the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas, never more so than now, as LPAs continue to face cutbacks. Since the last appraisal in 2004, the creation of both the Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association (BSANA) in 2012 and the Reading Borough Council sanctioned creation of the Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) in 2016 have increased greatly the possibility for the management and improvement of the conservation area. It is such organisations that give a substantial base for the implementation of a management plan that can positively improve the current situation of the conservation area. Additionally, with the work of such organisations, the opportunity for funding and the creation of initiatives and programmes give distinct hope for the preservation and enhancement of the Conservation Area going forward.

The basis for such a plan in the form of listed issues and threats to the conservation area, is attached as Appendix Article 1.

It should also be advised that these groups examine along with the council, the potential benefits of the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan for the area, as outlined and recommended in government policy guidelines. Whilst this tool is being recommended by the government, it has yet to show an appreciable take up from communities, but has been touted as aiding in the improvement of conservation areas "at risk". Nonetheless, such an evaluation of the use of this tool is additionally advised.

Seeking funding for Improvements to the Public Realm and Properties

As recommended by Historic England, placing the conservation area on the national "Heritage at Risk" listing, is expected to open-up options for funds to be found and used in the area for the improvement of both the public realm and potentially with private properties that are putting the area at greatest risk in the destruction of the historical fabric, character and detailing that is critical to the area.

It is noted alone, that a street such as the Oxford Road might be especially improved by applying for the Heritage Lottery Fund Townscape Heritage grant scheme. That grant offers funds from £100,000-£2 million for the rejuvenation of historic townscapes. The programme helps community groups engage in the development and implementation of schemes to help restore character to conservation areas displaying particular social and economic situations that show need. For example, it is noted that the fund has been used in rejuvenating private properties on the Bedford High Street to great effect.

There are other funding streams that should be explored in more detail by working with the Heritage at Risk Southeast Team of Historic England, and as such, this appraisal recommends

the aggressive exploration of what funds can be made available for the rejuvenation of some of the most challenged parts of the area.

Additionally, the Oxford Road was analysed to best understand the complete picture of that area west of the railway bridge. With the unifying trail of Georgian terraced houses extending from Russell Street to Argyle Street and the continuing array of small storefront properties along the route, it was determined also to extend the boundary to the north side of the Oxford Road and also to extend that boundary entirely up to the railway bridge, where in deed the community meets its clear dividing line in terms of its make-up. In such a proposal, this move considerably changes the centre in balance of what has been called heretofore the Russell Street Castle Hill conservation area. Historically, it was both Castle Hill and the Oxford Road that were the two primary routes out of Reading since medieval times, if not earlier. Castle Hill lead westward to the Bath Road and the Oxford Road lead north towards Oxford. The entire Conservation Area is thus inexorably linked to these two roads historically, with the resulting residential neighbourhood that sprang up between them on the connector routes created between the two. Given the gravitas of history and the shift of balance of the Conservation Area with this reconfiguration, the re-naming of the Conservation Area to reflect this is recommended.

Conservation Area Boundary Review and Proposed Name Change

A thorough review of the existing Conservation Area boundary was undertaken in conjunction with consultations with community individuals and members of the Conservation Area Advisory Committee and the Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association, who followed guidance and education ideals set out by Historic England in using the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit. Participants were asked to carefully consider certain streets and areas around outside of the 2004 boundary and to consider their worthiness for inclusion on the Conservation Area. Their views fed strongly into the recommendations below.

As the Russell Street Castle Hill Conservation Area is already a large conservation area and as Historic England guidance cautions against large conservation areas so as not to dilute the specialness of a given area, the decision to co-opt any additional area into the existing Conservation Area is one that was weighed very carefully with members working on the Proposal from BSANA and the CAAC. Areas to the west including Brunswick Hill and Argyle Road were thought to be desirous of inclusion, but in weighing the focus of the Conservation Area, it was decided against the inclusion of that area, and that other measures for the preservation and enhancement of that area should be considered further down the line.

Due to concerns over degradation, it was likewise considered to remove certain streets from the area. Such a move was generally advised against by Historic England without substantial reason unless there was determined that there was no hope of improvement. However, in stark contrast to the 2004 appraisal, where the positive addition of significant community interest was encouraged but at the time not present, there are now two substantial groups in the form of the Council sanctioned Conservation Area Advisory Committee and with the local Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association that have shown significant interest in the improvement of the area. It is hoped that in forming a Conservation Area Management Plan in cooperation with these groups that there will be able to be a discernable improvement in the area. It is primarily in light of this factor at this time, that there is not recommended a removal of any streets in the Conservation Area, despite some being borderline worthy of Conservation Area inclusion at this time.

Therefore, the following amendments which are all additions are proposed:

A 1.) The inclusion of 205 to 283 Oxford Road (odds) on the south side of the Oxford Road from Prospect to the railway bridge.

A 2.) The inclusion of 78 Oxford Road to 190 Oxford Road (evens) on the north side from Albert Road to the railway bridge.

This inclusion comprises the single largest change to the boundary of the Conservation Area with this appraisal. The inclusion of a substantially increased portion of the Oxford Road 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 out of the Reading town centre along which the infill residential of this Conservation Area sprang up around (the other being the Castle Street/Castle hill/Bath Road route to the south). When taken in the entire context from the IDR Bridge on the east to the railway bridge in the west, one observes a long, ever-evolving corridor with no discernible boundary end, except at the railway bridge. Therefore, it is seen to be within this total area, one single character area yielding a "regular variety" in its mix of Georgian Terraces, notable historic school and religious buildings and small retail shops that harmonize with a vibrant and colourful character. Holy Trinity Church and the Oxford Road Community School are notable along the route along with the many Georgian terraces on the south side. The history of the road from the IDR bridge juncture to the railway bridge has been inexorably linked together since its development in the 19c.

Historic England advises that, in most situations, it is not advisable to end a conservation area boundary line in the middle of a road as the view from properties in a conservation area are deemed to be worthy of a similarly reflective view. This ruling is particularly worthwhile in considering an urban context such as the Oxford Road which is subject to intense and sometimes rapid change. Poor development on one side of the road can, and has frequently had a negative effect on the appearance of the Oxford Road as a whole.

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 question. 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 considered for inclusion in the conservation area." Other noted highlights of the road west of Prospect Street were the school that is "the jewel in the crown," the 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 continuing to the mid to late 19th c buildings tell the story of the development of this portion of Reading's residential expansion west and the legibility of this development is best observed in a story that is told along both sides of the road.

B.1.) The inclusion of all addresses on Body Road, Anstey Road and 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."

However, due to the development, since the last appraisal in the area, of a stable and energetic neighbourhood organisation (The Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association, BSANA) in the area of which these streets are part of, the area has made reasonable improvements in terms of the care given to individual properties and the Association has worked to secure the removal of appx 70 bins along the pavement in Anstey Road. One of the positives of this action was the visual exposure of original street furniture in the form of 4 original gas street lamps along Anstey Road – one of the highest concentrations along a street in the entire area. The streets are included and involved in the activities of the

Association, and as such the area is inexorably linked and tied to the neighbourhood by virtue of this inclusion in the remit of the Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association. This should have sufficient positive effect of continuing to buoy the area along with this rest of the neighbourhood. The guidance of the 2004 appraisal noted that a good working relationship with residents was needed in the area overall and this is a visible result of that advice that has indeed lead to improvements that make the area worthwhile. In the initial appraisal 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".

Geographically, these streets figure significantly in the neighbourhood and in the conservation area itself. It is hoped, 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 (already included in the 2004 appraisal. It is deemed that if this area were to continue with unchecked degradation, then this would conversely affect the rest of the immediate Conservation Area in a negative manner. Finally, it is hoped that by including this area, in the future, that degradation will be slowed to the properties and that when the more modern buildings facing the IDR (the Salvation Army, and the Carey Centre) are to be redeveloped, that improvements in their suitability in the overall make-up of the Conservation Area can be considered.

B.2.) 1-15 Castle Street (Castle Gate flats)

This property is recommended for inclusion simply to flesh out the geographical line with the re-inclusion of the IDR Road area up to Coley Place. Whilst the Castlegate flats regrettably replaced an earlier building, their development is a reasonably good, modern example of modern development that sits well within the conservation area and does not detract from the overall character of the area by its inclusion.

C1.) 3 to 7 Coley Place (odds) and the open park area to the south

This small terrace of houses along the rise of Coley Place on its east side as seen from Castle Street, present a notable and charming view from the vantage of Castle Street. Additionally, the park to the south of these terraced houses is to be included for hopeful future retention and development as an open space noting its historical association with the Holybrook riverbed below it.

D1.) 2 thru 28 Mansfield Road (evens) 1 through 29 Mansfield Road (odds)

D2.) 1,2,3 Coley Park Road

The inclusion of this area south of Castle Crescent is advised from an appraisal of the character area where-in Castle Crescent sits. The houses of Mansfield Road were created during the same housing development phase as Castle Crescent and bear many similarities in styling and original purpose. It is perceived to be reasonable to, at this time, only include those houses along Mansfield Road that were built within this development c1890 -1910 c. The houses retain many original features with Victorian tiles and polychrome detailing and are generally well-cared for. The high brick walls of Coley Park Road between the two streets (forms a pleasant connector road and the walls some with curved cap tops) are worthy of preservation.

E.) The inclusion of 1 to 23 Prospect Street (odds)

The two-story houses from 1 to 9 Prospect Street form a unique group of simple Georgian terraced cottages for the area and are likely c 1820-1830, developed for a more modest working man than the larger, more prestigious properties being built at the same time in the area. As such they sit well in context with the Prospect Mews just to the north. No. 9 still functions as a single family house with many original features including timber beams intact. The remaining larger houses to the south were built prior to 1853. The mouldings and detailing of 23 were of particular note during the Oxford Road Character Assessment Toolkit evaluation in march of 2016. Regrettably, due to recent building on the former site of an

historical stone- mason's plot on the west side of the street, there is little reason to co-op the other side of the street. There is every reason, however, to co-op what is of value along Prospect Street as it was the first purpose-built connector road to the south from the Oxford Road, "founded" by William Pratt Swallow. The early properties at 1-9 help to tell an interesting facet of the Georgian history of the area.

Change of name to the Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area

In the analysis and proposal of boundary changes that properly define the readability of the Conservation Area's history as a microcosm of 19c residential development, thought had to be given to the boundaries of the area and in this case, to the name of the conservation area itself, to determine if the story of the area is being most clearly conveyed to the public.

The Oxford Road was analysed to best understand the complete picture of this very significant road east of the railway bridge. With the unifying trail of Georgian terraced houses extending from Russell Street to Argyle Street and the continuing array of small storefront properties along the entirety of the route, we see that the "regular variety" of the Oxford Road from the IDR to the railway bridge that tells the story of the early development of the Oxford Road in the 19c. We can grasp an understanding of its early use as a route south of the River Thames to points north, and we can see in the historical fabric, the early expansion out of town in the Georgian facades of the large terraces along the route. The infill of smaller shops throughout the 19c paint the picture of a high street building up to answer the needs of the adjoining residential streets.

It is the expansion of the railroad that passes over the proposed end of the Oxford Road for the conservation area that enables us to see the complete story of Reading's 19c industrial development and its turn from the 18c market gardening in Swallow's Nurseries and in Mrs. Zinzan's Fields to the industries that created the population that needed to be housed on those former gardening plots.

With the incorporation into the conservation area of the Oxford Road clear to the railway bridge, the centre of balance of the Russell Street Castle Hill conservation area changes. It also becomes clearer what the story of the conservation area is about: the legibility of 19c suburban life for the residents of Reading.

Historically, it was both the Castle Hill and the Oxford Road routes that were the two primary routes out of Reading to the west since medieval times. With the resulting residential neighbourhood that sprang up between them, the entire Conservation Area is tied to these two roads historically, on the connector routes created between the two. In rediscovering the focus of this Conservation Area, through the clarification of what its correct boundary lines should be, the evident need for this name change becomes clear.