35 BAKER STREET, READING, RG1 7XX

HERITAGE STATEMENT

4 JANUARY 2022

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BACKGROUND

Introduction

1.1 This Heritage Statement has been produced to support an application for Listed Building Consent for carrying out alterations to 35 Baker Street, Reading, RG1 7XX.

1.2 The desktop research included reviewing OS maps, statutory listing and the conservation area appraisal. The property has been visited and photographs taken, some of which are included in the text whilst the full set is in Appendix 1 (some were taken by the lettings agent and hence show furniture although the house is currently empty).

Purpose of the Report

1.3 The report provides an understanding of the heritage assets and wider context to inform the proposed changes together with meeting the requirements set out in local and national planning policy. This includes Paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 which states that applicants are required to '*describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance...*'

Heritage Assets

1.4 The property is a Grade II listed building which forms part of 2 pairs of semi-detached houses comprising 33-39 Baker Street (List Entry Number 1321984) first designated in 1978, as below.

BAKER STREET 1. 5128 Nos 33 to 39 (odd) SU 7073 12/403 II 2. Early-mid C19. 2 pairs of semi-detached houses linked by porch annexe. 2 storeys and basement. Each pair is a stucco pavilion with hipped slate roof and 2 ranges of glazing bar sashes. Link block has 2 doors and jettied 1st floor with one window on Doric column. 1 range of plain sash windows each. Nos 33 and 39 have doors to sides.

1.5 No.35 Baker Street is located within the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area which extends out to the Inner Distribution Road to the east, to the north up to Oxford Road, westwards along Baker Street and beyond Castle Hill to the south.

Location and Context

1.6 The property is located within a built-up part of Reading to the west of the town centre (see Fig.1 below). The group of four listed properties sit on the south side of Baker Street, at the junction of Baker Street and Jesse Terrace/Waylen Street. They lie at a change in direction to Baker Street and hence are more visible when approaching from the west.

1.7 The four properties are located within a residential area comprising a traditional street pattern, with houses fronting the street and long gardens at the rear, creating perimeter blocks.

1.8 Most of the buildings have two or three storeys and are set back from the road whilst providing a continuous frontage along this part of Baker Street. Some have small front gardens, enclosed walls and/or metal railings.

Fig. 1 Location Plan

History

1.9 As set out in the listing, No.33-39 were built in mid-late 19th century (the two maps below set out the context around that time) and comprised a block of four buildings with interlinking sections. They all had similar sized rear gardens backing onto the larger homes along Jesse Terrace.

1.10 There have since been extensions added to the rear of No.33, 35 and 37. Parts of the gardens for No.33 and 35 have also been changed and are now used as parking for the flats to the south.

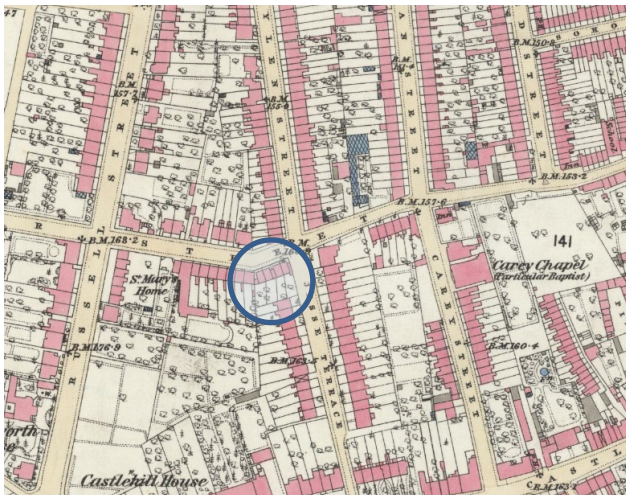


Fig. 2 Ordnance Survey 25-inch England and Wales, 1875 (copyright with National Library of Scotland)

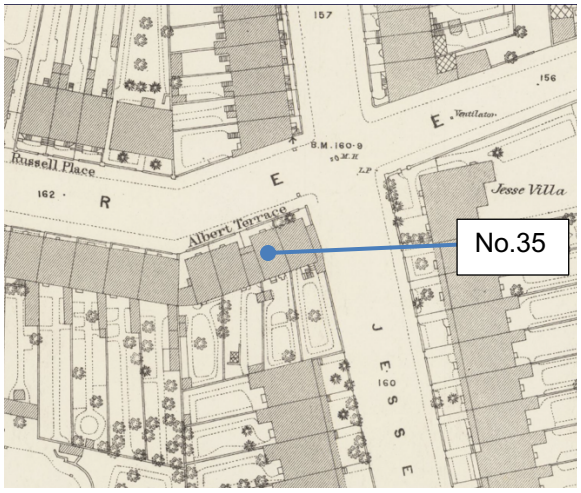


Fig.3 Town Plans of England and Wales, 1877 (copyright with National Library of Scotland)

THE PROPERTY

Description

1.11 No.35 is one of two pairs of semi-detached houses, all with two storeys and hipped roofs (see photograph below). They have a stucco pavilion style and Regency style of architecture. The two in the middle (no.35 and 37) are connected by a porch annexe with a shallow pitched roof behind a parapet. The porch overhangs the entrance to each property, which are split by a Doric style column.

Plate 1: Front Elevation of No 33-37 Baker Street (No 35 has the hedge, window above door serves Bedroom 3)

1.12 The properties have 16-pane sash windows although the porch annex has a casement window, probably changed before the listing. All four houses have basements and the two on either side (No 33 and 37) have been converted into flats. No.35 and 37 still have their original metal railings. All four properties are constructed of brick with a light-coloured render. They have hipped roofs comprising grey slate extending up to a brick chimney stack. A small single storey extension has been built on the rear of No.35 and comprises brick walls and what appears to be a corrugated asbestos roof (see Plate 2 below).

Plate 2: Rear elevation of No.35 with brick built single-storey extension

PLANNING

Planning Policy

1.13 The key planning policies are set out in the local plan and the NPPF. Key policies in the Reading Borough Local Plan are Policy EN1 (listed buildings and conservation areas) and Policy EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas) although the application does not propose to alter the built form or make any additions.

1.14 The key parts of the NPPF are set out in Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment. This relates to determination of application affecting heritage assets with guidance in paragraphs 197-208.

1.15 Other material considerations include the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area Appraisal (March 2020). An extract from that document is set out in Fig.4 below. No.33-39 sit within the Caste Street/Castle Hill part and are mentioned on page 75 in relation to key views.

Fig.4 Extract from Conservation Area (No.33-39 circled)

Planning History

1.16 According to the online register on the Council's website, there are no applications for planning permission or listed building consent. However, the information only goes back to 1988 and the single-storey rear extension was almost certainly before then.

THE PROPOSALS

1.17 The proposals are set out in the accompanying drawings and described below.

Ground Floor

1. Remove internal wall enclosing current dining room.
2. Remove kitchen units.
3. Remove part of internal wall next to living room and install new steel beam, retaining part of the down stand (minimum 300mm).
4. Remove stairs to first floor and basement.
5. Construct new wall and replacement stairs, plus small bulkhead near entrance.
6. Demolish internal walls within modern single-storey extension and install new kitchen.
7. Replace corrugated asbestos sheet roof covering single-storey extension with new flat roof.
8. Block up small window in kitchen within modern single-storey extension and replace another larger window with new uPVC window.

First Floor

9. Remove internal walls and install new beams to support roof joists above.
10. Construct new timber stud walls for bathroom and bedroom 2 along with staircase and landing.
11. Install new bathroom fittings and linen cupboard.
12. Install new soil and vent pipe to extend into loft space or onto roof.
13. Block up existing door into the office/bedroom 3 and create new opening and door.
14. Replace existing window in office/bedroom 3 with new double glazed uPVC sash window.
15. Move and/or install new radiators.

Basement

16. Remove existing internal wall.
17. Install new stairs.
18. Replace the two existing windows with new uPVC style windows.

1.18 The main reasons for carrying out the work are to bring the property up to a modern standard and improve the layout, creating a family home for the Applicant. The property was previously used as a rental for several years and requires modernisation. The property needs refurbishment and repair including damp in the basement and investigating issues with the floor joists, currently being supported by wooden beams and an Acro prop.

1.19 Moving the bathroom upstairs and replacing it with the kitchen will enable a proper dining room to be created. The current kitchen/diner space is poorly configured and both functions sit within key

circulation routes making it particularly difficult to use the space for eating. The proposals will, where possible, use the floorboards and floor joists removed to fill in the old stairwell.

1.20 Adding a new set of stairs also creates an opportunity to improve the entrance into the Office/Bedroom 3. The current door is only 1.5m high and lies approximately 360mm below Bedroom 2. Therefore, any person entering the room must duck whilst dropping down two steps, which is hazardous. The design deals with these restrictions by providing a new landing at the same height as the Office/Bedroom 3 together with a larger door (possibly reusing one from elsewhere in the building) into a new opening, as per the proposed section drawing. A new Office will help with the current working from home arrangements which are unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.

1.21 There will be a new opening created between the new dining room and lounge. This will keep a down stand to retain some of the historic features and help demarcate the two functions/spaces. Sections of the central walls will be removed to accommodate these changes.

1.22 Replacing the roof of the single-storey rear extension will improve insulation and remove a potentially hazardous material.

DRAWINGS

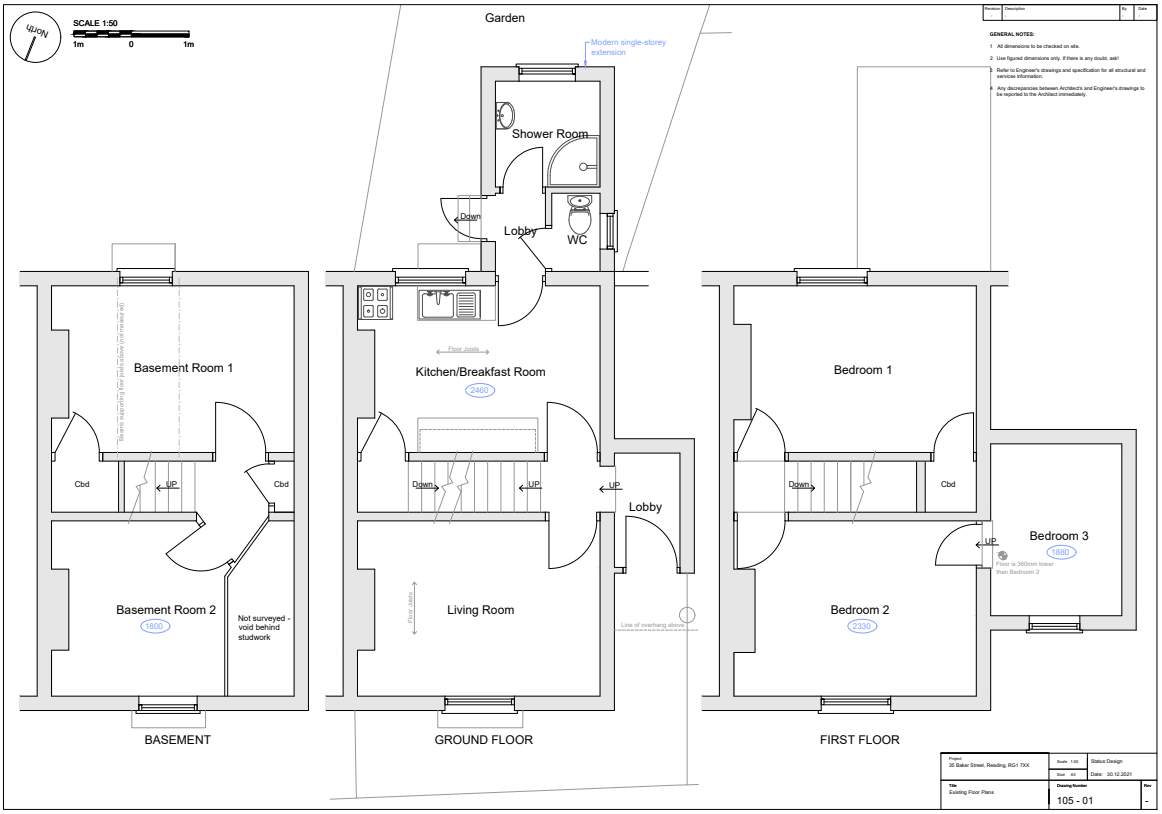


Fig.5 Existing floor plan

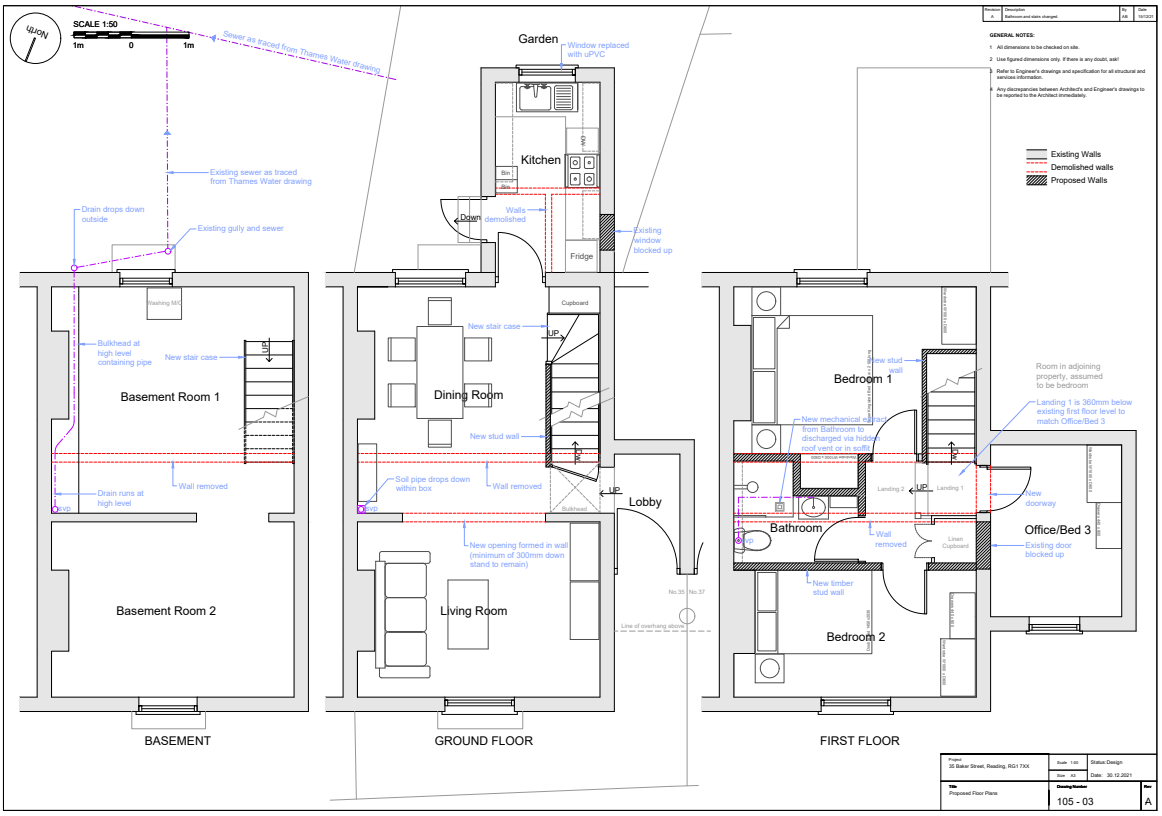


Fig.6 Proposed floor plan

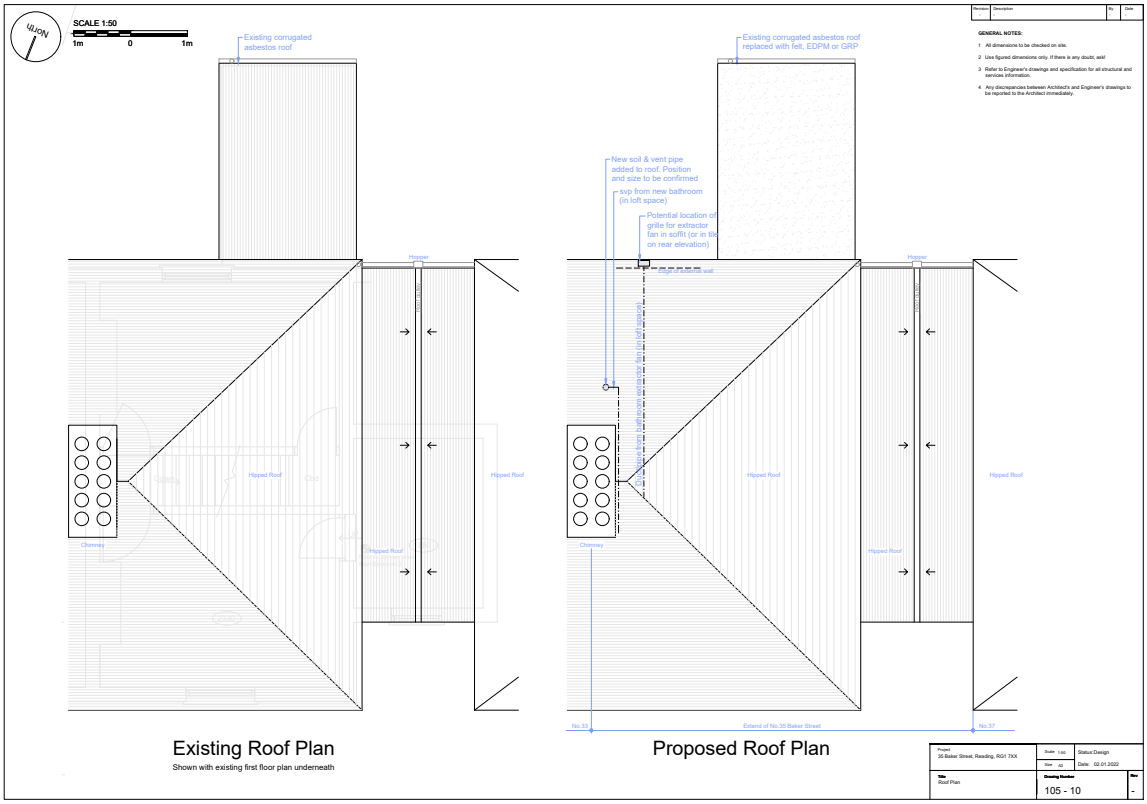


Fig.7 Roof Plan

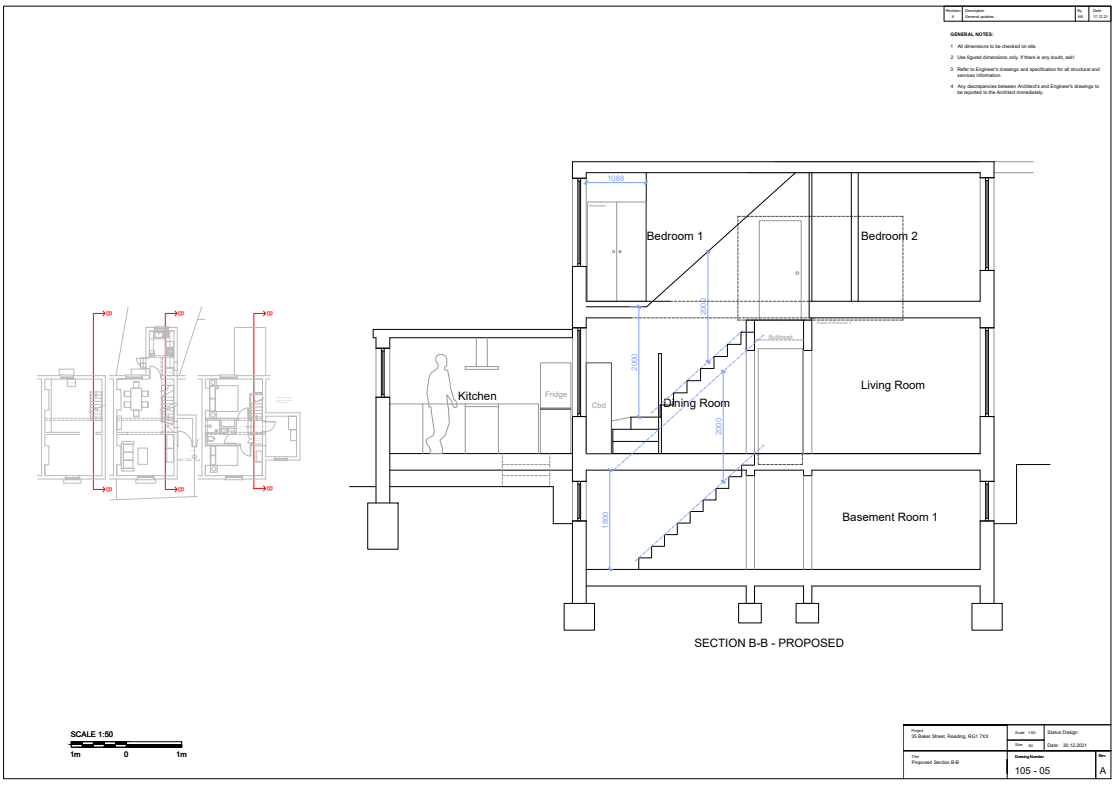


Fig.8 Proposed section

Fig.9 Proposed front and rear elevation

ASSESSMENT

1.23 This section assesses the significance of the heritage asset and considers the headings set out in English Heritage's Conservation Principles (2008) and the requirements of paragraph 194 of the NPPF. The assessment considers the listed building and views in the conservation area.

1.24 In terms of the **historic** aspects, the property is a Regency style house typifying the local and regional vernacular style of the early/mid 19th Century. For the **Aesthetic/architectural**, much of the appreciation of the property is derived from its group value, seen as part of a pair of semi-detached dwellings, particularly when viewed from Baker Street to the west, given their position on a bend (and impact upon the Conservation Area which is of higher significance). The 2+1 bedroom arrangement is quite common for Victorian homes in Reading and elsewhere. Replacing the casement window in the front elevation would also improve the character of the building and its contribution towards the conservation area. The **Archaeological** aspects are not considered to be relevant for this application which relates to internal changes. The property has low value as it is assumed to have been built during the same period and the only excavation work required is for a new drain involving a very small area, probably excavated when the foundations of the original property were built.

1.25 The application is considered to accord with Policy EN1. Whilst it does alter an internal layout and removes part of the historic fabric, overall the proposal would not have an adverse impact upon the key elements which contribute towards the special architectural or historic interest/setting. The application does not materially alter the exterior character of the building and therefore it accords with Policy EN3 and the impact upon the conservation area.

SUMMARY

1.26 This application for listed building consent has been submitted to modernise No.35 Baker Street, improve its layout, and carry out general repairs, helping safeguard its future. The proposal is considered to have slight impact upon the fabric of this listed building which is required to improve its layout and make better use of the building.

1.27 Replacing the modern casement window, cutting back/removing the hedge and carrying out repairs would improve the front elevation of No.35, the group value of the two pairs of semi-detached buildings and the Conservation Area.

1.28 Overall, the proposals are considered to have a very limited impact upon the building, improves the front elevation and would accord with the development plan and national guidance.

Appendix 1 – Photos of 35 Baker Street

35 Baker Street, Reading, RG1 7XX

Date: 09/12/2021

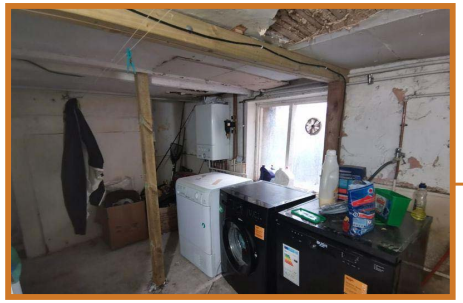
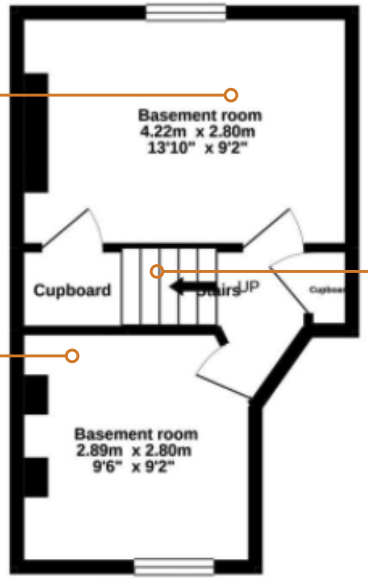
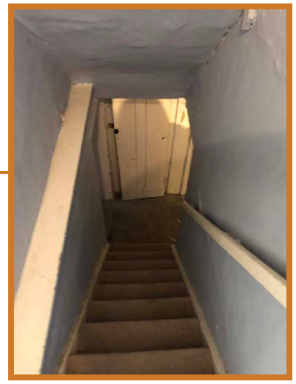
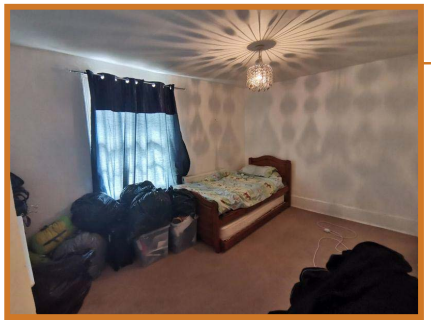
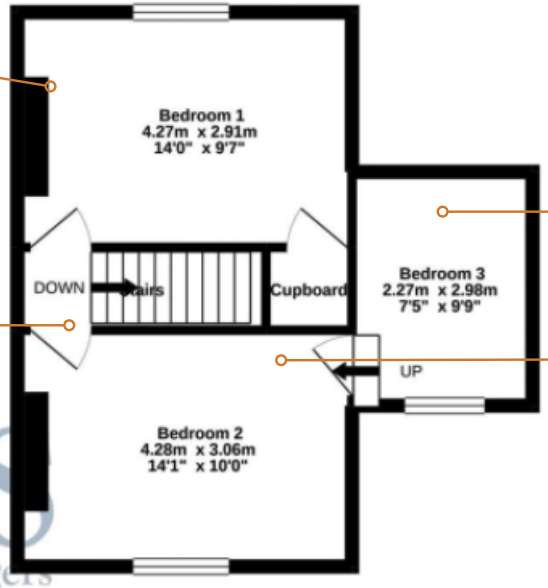
Description from Sales Particulars

This Grade II Listed three-story house is located on Baker Street which is just outside of Reading Town Centre.

A flag-stoned hallway leads up a couple of steps to an inner hallway. There is one good-sized reception room facing to the front of the property and to the rear, a large kitchen fitted with adequate cupboard space and a free-standing oven. A door leads down to the cellar where there are two large storage rooms. Also off the kitchen is a lobby with access to a separate WC, a bathroom with an electric shower (no bath), and access to a good-sized enclosed back garden.

On the top floor, there are 2 double bedrooms with a third room of the bedroom at the front of the property.

On-street permit parking. EPC Rating D (62)

Floor Plans from Sales Particulars

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