

Heritage Statement

Block F St Martins Centre, 37 Church Street,
Caversham, Reading

August 2018

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Client

Hermes Property Unit Trust

Our reference

HERR3004

28 August 2018

1. Introduction

Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Turley Heritage for Hermes Property Unit Trust ('the applicant') to provide relevant and proportionate information to the local planning authority with regard to the heritage impacts associated with a full application for planning permission for:

"A mixed-use development involving A3 uses, retail, leisure/cinema and residential units."

- 1.2 The Site comprises part of the St Martin's Centre in Caversham ('the Site'). The Site is located within the varied townscape setting of a small number of grade II listed buildings (the Caversham Free Public Library, the Caversham Baptist Free Church and Caversham's West Memorial Hall) (Figure 1.1). The Site is located to the east of the St Peters Conservation Area.

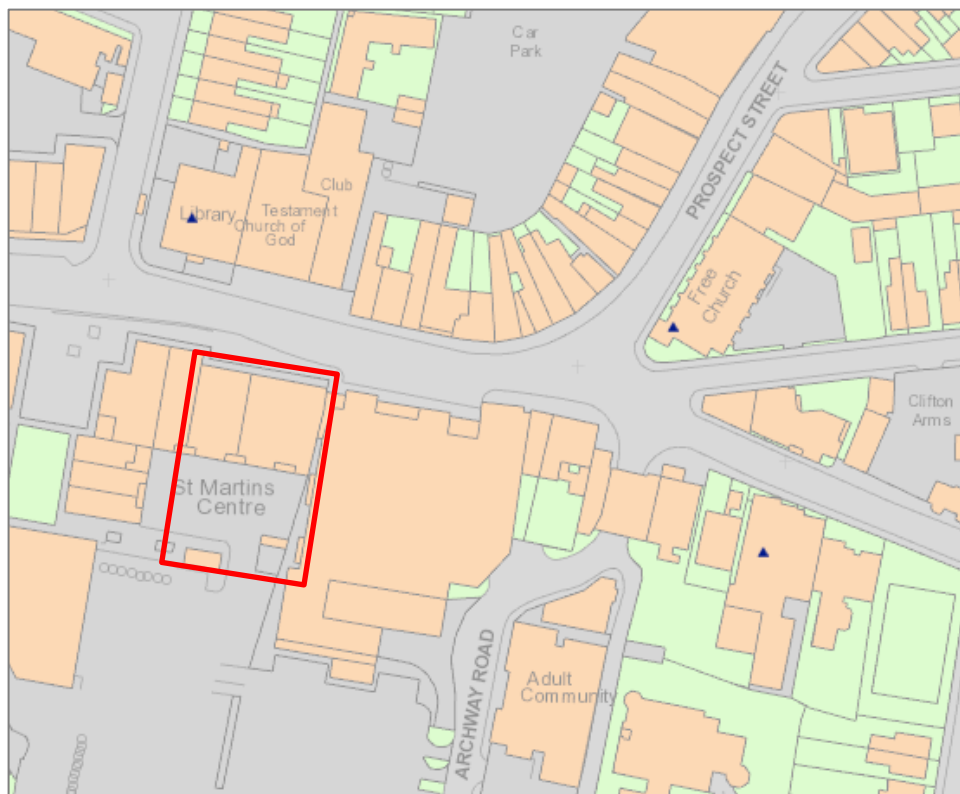


Figure 1.1: Indicative Site location, bounded red, with listed buildings marked by blue triangles.

- 1.3 Accordingly, the requirement for this report derives first from the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 that places a duty upon the local planning authority in determining applications for development affecting listed buildings or conservation areas to respectively pay special regard or attention, respectively, to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting, or preserving or enhancing the

character or appearance of the area. There is no statutory protection for the setting of a conservation area.

- 1.4 The National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') provides the Government's national planning policy on the conservation of the historic environment. In respect of information requirements for applications, it sets out that:

*"In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant 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."*¹

- 1.5 Paragraph 190 sets out that local planning authorities should also identify and assess the particular significance of heritage assets that may be affected by proposals. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of proposals in order to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Structure of this Report

- 1.6 In accordance with these legislative and policy requirements, **Section 2** of this report firstly identifies the heritage assets that would be affected by proposed development.
- 1.7 **Section 3** provides a summary of the historic development of the area and the Site as context to proportionate statements of significance for the relevant heritage assets, including the contribution made by setting (and the Site as an element of setting) to that significance. This assessment provides the baseline for the proper consideration of the heritage impacts of the proposed development. The assessment is based on existing published information; desk based research and on-site visual survey.
- 1.8 **Section 4** sets out a review of the impact of the application proposals upon the particular significance of the relevant heritage assets. This is considered in light of the relevant statutory duty of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as appropriate), national policy in the Framework and supported by National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), and local planning policy and guidance for the historic environment. The findings of this report are summarised and concluded at **Section 5**.
- 1.9 **Appendix 1** contains a map of the St Peters Conservation Area. **Appendix 2** contains the relevant list entries. **Appendix 3** sets out in full the relevant statutory duties of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, national policy contained within the Framework and supported by the NPPG, and also regional and local planning policy for the historic environment. This heritage legislative and policy context is that within which the proposed development should be considered.

¹ DCLG, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2018 – para. 189

2. The Heritage Assets

Introduction

- 2.1 The Framework defines a heritage asset as:

“A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).”²

Designated Heritage Assets

- 2.2 Designated heritage assets are those which possess a level of heritage interest that justifies designation under relevant legislation and are then subject to particular procedures in planning decisions that involve them.

Conservation Area: St Peters

- 2.3 The Site is not located within the St Peters Conservation Area; a map showing the conservation area’s current designated boundary is included at **Appendix 1**. The St Peters Conservation Area was formally designated on 28 April 1988.
- 2.4 The Council is currently consulting on a review of the conservation area appraisal and the boundary of the designated area until 14th September 2018. This Heritage Statement has been prepared in awareness of this draft conservation area appraisal and proposed boundary amendments.

Listed Buildings

- 2.5 The Caversham Free Public Library was designated at Grade II on December 14, 1978. An extract from the list entry is reproduced below, and the full list entry is included at **Appendix 2**. There is ambiguity regarding the architect responsible for the design of the listed building with the list entry suggesting F.W. Albury whilst local detailed research identifies the local architect Mr. W.G. Lewton³.

“CHURCH STREET 1. 5128 Caversham Caversham Free Public Library SU 7174 11/455 II 2. Foundation stone laid 23.iii 1907. Site given by Andrew Carnegie. Architect possibly F W Albury. Irregular red brick and stone sub-Voysey style with tiled roof. Asymmetrically disposed gables - one with inscription, other with date - flanking off centre tower which has pylon corner piers, and which is capped by ball finials and a small copper domed stair turret. Entrance in tower with large columns. Above is an Atlas figure (signed B L) supporting a clock. 3 windows in all, 3, 1 and 2 lights with dividing pilasters of alternate stone and brick and floral caps. Memorial tablet in marbled lobby. 3 window return to Hemdean Road. Interior altered.”

² MHCLG, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2018 – Annex 2: Glossary

³ Cliffe, D., 2007. Roots and Branches. First ed. Reading: Two Rivers Press and Dils, J. A., 1999. From Village to Suburb: Caversham 1840 to 1911. Oxoniensia, Volume 64, pp. 87-115

- 2.6 The Caversham Baptist Free Church, by Alfred Waterhouse, was designated at Grade II on December 14, 1978. An extract from the list entry is reproduced below, and in full at **Appendix 2**.

“PROSPECT STREET 1. 5128 Caversham Caversham Baptist Free Church SU 7174 11/266a II 2. 1875-77. Alfred Waterhouse architect. Difficult corner site, Gothic style. 6 bay rain hall to Prospect Street, 2 stage tower to south-west (corner) angle and gable end front to south. Red brick with stone capped plinth and inner window reveals. Grey blue decoration (to south front). Banded tile roof. West front: paired lancets with separating buttresses (containing tumbled brickwork), the 2 right hand bays have lower windows with herring bone and decorative infill. Corbelled brick eaves cornice in 2 layers. Small 2 bay projection to north. Tower has chamfered corners, 2 tall stages and a decorative upper stage; capped by tall hipped roof with weathervane. South front: stepped triple lancet with over arch and decorative infill below; central gabled porch with flanking lean-to annexes. Punched lozenges in gable and in kneeler to right. The interior has been well maintained. Low brick wall angled to corner site fronts South Street, stone chamfered capping. This building is included as a good example of Waterhouse's use of materials with brick, stone and roof tiles of different colours.”

- 2.7 Caversham's West Memorial Hall, also by Waterhouse, was also listed at Grade II in December 1978. The West Memorial Hall is a gothic, red-brick former Baptist Free Church. An extract from the list entry is copied below and included in full at **Appendix 2**.

“GOSBROOK ROAD 1. 5128 (South Side) West Memorial Hall SU 7174 11/494 II 2. 1865-66 by Alfred Waterhouse. Gothic. Red brick former Baptist Free Church, gable end to street. Stone plinth and dressings. Banded tile roof. Blue brick bands in gable above and below rose window. Tumbled brick in chimney to south gable. Blue and red brick herring bone work in tympanum over pair of lancets to left. The main feature is the right hand bay - this has a hipped rectangular stair turret to gallery with external stairs on quadrant wall to base. 4 bay side wall to west with arched passage below buttresses, coggled eaves cornice, paired lancets, except to 1/2 dormer to north. 1911 extension to east with central gable, echoes style of north gable. Interior rearranged. An interesting display of materials.”

Non-Designated Heritage Assets

- 2.8 The Framework identifies that heritage assets include both designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing). Reading Borough Council maintains a 'List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures' (also known as the 'Local List') for Reading itself, but there is no up-to-date local list of buildings for Caversham. The 2009 Conservation Area Appraisal notes that buildings of townscape merit are typically,

“good examples of relatively unaltered 19th century and later buildings where their style, detailing and building materials provides the streetscape with interest and variety [...] it is generally unlisted corner buildings which strictly have a more commanding presence.”

- 2.9 The draft Conservation Area Appraisal for St Peters, however, identifies a number of buildings of townscape merit which have not previously been identified. The Buildings of Townscape Merit proposed in the draft conservation area appraisal were identified by community members, led by the Conservation Area Action Committee and the Caversham Area District Residents Association, with assistance and support from Historic England. Should the draft be adopted, Reading Borough Council will give weight to this document in planning decisions, and these buildings will become non-designated heritage assets. However, in adopted policy and guidance, no buildings of townscape merit or locally listed buildings are formally identified in the vicinity of the Site, and so this matter is not considered further as part of this report.

3. Assessment of Heritage Significance

Summary of Historical Development

Caversham

- 3.1 Early settlement activity in the Caversham area dates from Palaeolithic through to the Roman period, as evidenced by archaeological finds. Domesday Book records Caversham as being held by Swein, older brother of King Harold II. Caversham's development has been largely defined by the growth of Reading, with both settlements positioned favourably on the banks of the River Thames (Figure 3.1), which historically defined the border between Berkshire and Oxfordshire. Within the historic core of Caversham, St Peters Church (Grade II*) dates from 1162, although it was partially destroyed in 1643 during the Civil War, with its tower rebuilt in timber, and then replaced in 1868.



Figure 3.1: 1761 Map of Caversham

- 3.2 The Thames has been central to the settlement of Caversham for centuries, with a substantial bridge dating from the early-13th century erected near the site of the existing crossing (Figure 3.1). Due to its position connecting London to its wider environment, Caversham Bridge was the site of several historic conflicts and, notably, was divided between Oxford's Royalists and London's Parliamentarians during the Civil War. The bridge was frequently repaired and maintained until 1868, when an additional bridge was built in iron, although its design was received with disdain at the time. The current bridge was opened in 1926.
- 3.3 In the early-19th century, Caversham existed as a sizeable agricultural village, which grew with Reading's Victorian industrialisation, as residential development encroached across the river and into the village. This is reflected in a significant increase in population from 1,642 people in 1840 to almost 10,000 residents in the early-20th century. This 19th century growth, in conjunction with the 1834 and 1865 Inclosure

Awards, effectively erased the areas of open common land from the settlement, and the pattern of local employment shifted in tandem with this from agriculture to industry, with a great number of Caversham residents commuting to jobs in the new railway and at the Huntley and Palmers biscuit factory.

- 3.4 These increasing employment opportunities saw workers' housing built close to Caversham village centre, with higher-status properties on the higher slopes. With this growth in housing came associated developments, such as schools, churches, and a cemetery (see Figure 3.2).

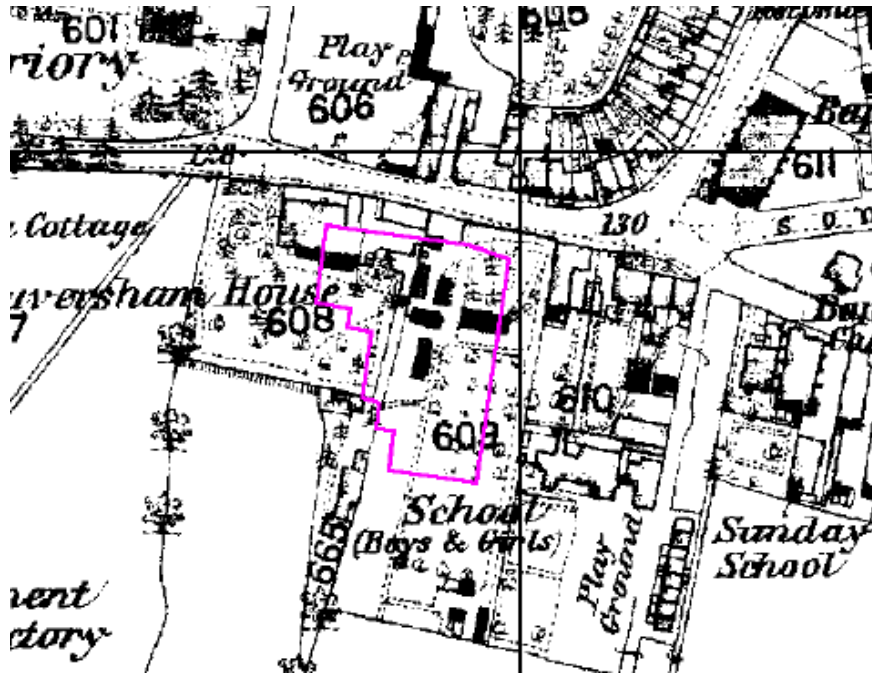


Figure 3.2: 1881 OS Map, with indicative Site boundary in pink.

- 3.5 Much of this 19th century expansion was delivered by local land owners supported by local architects, surveyors and builders. To the east of the Site, in Gosbrook Road, is the Waterhouse (Figure 3.3, originally built as a Baptist Chapel, later becoming the West Memorial Hall), which was constructed in 1865-66 to designs by Alfred Waterhouse, who lived locally. Waterhouse later designed the Baptist Free Church (Figure 3.3) in Prospect Street in 1876-77. In 1906-7, the Free Public Library (Figure 3.4) was built on land belonging to Mr Bullivant Williams, to a design by local architect William G Lewton.



Figure 3.3: West Memorial Hall (left) and Free Baptist Church (right).



Figure 3.4: Library by Lewton. Exterior (left) and interior (right).

- 3.6 The rapid growth of the previous century had left the settlement with inadequate sanitary and water provisions, and a long debate was had between the counties of Berkshire and Oxfordshire regarding the town's future. This was resolved in 1911, with the passing of a bill which incorporated Caversham into the Borough of Reading.
- 3.7 As the settlement expanded (Figure 3.5), the character of river traffic shifted from the former trading boats of the Thames boatyards to leisure. As a consequence, the Caversham riverside developed a tourist appeal, with hotels and other recreational facilities being constructed. This positioned the Thames-side aspect of Caversham as an established commercial centre by the early-20th century, with 105 shops, a library on the site of a former playground, police station, and population in excess of 9,000. Throughout the 20th century, expansion towards Caversham intensified, with a number of semi-detached properties being constructed in the 1920s and 30s, as shown in Figure 3.6.

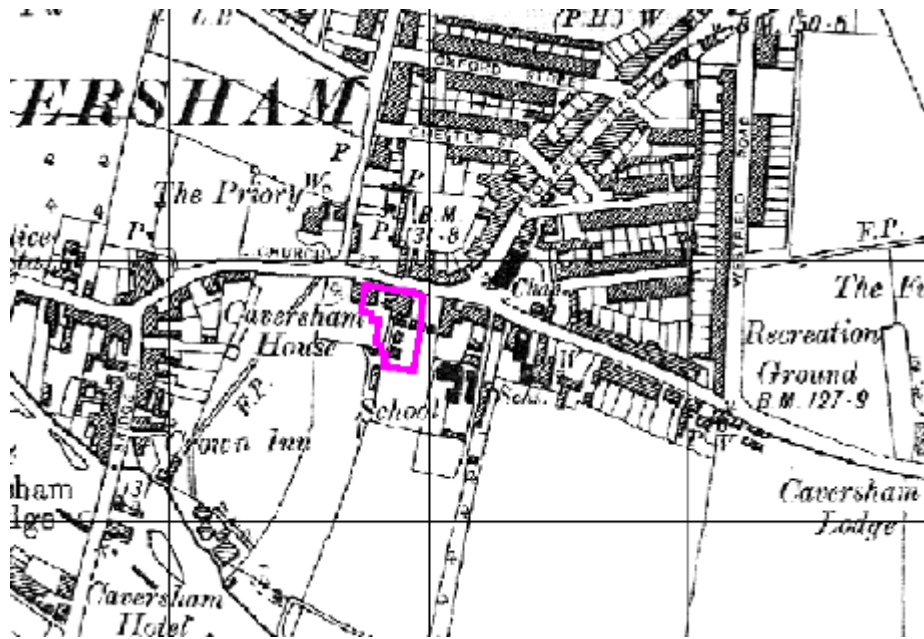


Figure 3.5: 1900 OS Map, with indicative Site boundary in pink.



Figure 3.6: 1932 OS Map, with indicative Site boundary in pink.

- 3.8 Caversham continued to grow and expand during the course of the 20th century. This increasing population density has seen some of its distinctive buildings converted to residential use. In particular, the West Memorial Hall was converted into apartments c.2000, and is now known as The Waterhouse. The land around the Site remained largely open into the middle of the 20th century, likely due to its association with the adjacent college (see Figure 3.7).



Figure 3.7: Aerial photograph of Caversham, 1947-1948, with indicative Site boundary in pink.

- 3.9 Today, central Caversham comprises remnants of the historic settlement, set in a varied context of mid-20th century townscape, with a mixture of commercial and residential uses. The key route through Caversham is the historic route of Church Street. The properties along Church Street are mixed in terms of age, function and character. There is a predominant pattern of ground floor retail usage, but the former Glendale Cinema opposite the Site now functions as a church, and the adjacent Caversham Free Public Library (Grade II listed) also adds diversity to the streetscape.

The Site and Local Context

- 3.10 The 1879 OS Map (Figure 3.8) records the presence of a large dwelling and gardens on the Site, which, historically, was known as Caversham House, and is recorded as having accommodated a school for boys in 1849. The land to the south of the Site remained as open space before being developed as gardens. A co-educational Parish School opened in 1863 to the east of the Site.

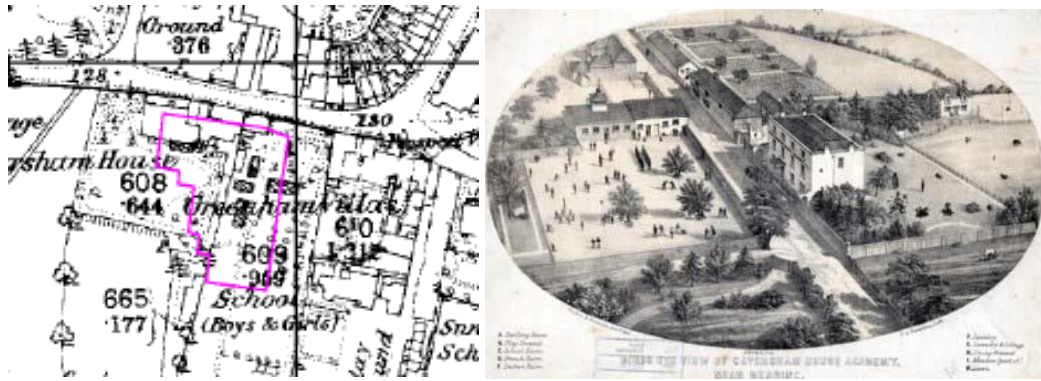


Figure 3.8: 1879 OS Map (left, with indicative Site boundary in pink) and illustration of Caversham House, c.1885 (right).⁴

- 3.11 The 1932 OS map illustrates that Caversham House remained in situ at this date, but without the outbuildings shown in 1879, and with land to the immediate east of the Site serving as a nursery garden (Figure 3.6). As the village of Caversham established itself as a small town, the nursery was developed as a cinema (Figures 3.9 and 3.10), increasing the intensity of use of the Site, and changing its function substantially. This development also infilled a key area of green space from Church Street.



Figure 3.9: 1932 OS Map, with indicative Site boundary in pink.

⁴ www.reading-forum.co.uk

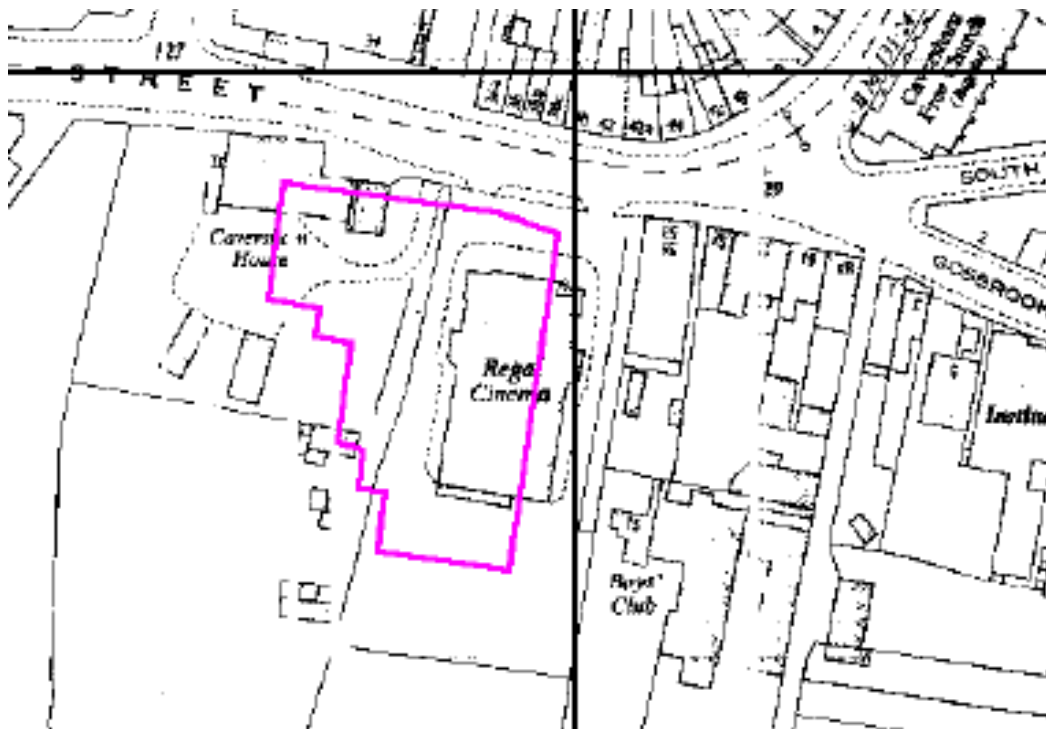


Figure 3.10: 1932 OS Map, with indicative Site location marked in pink.

- 3.12 Caversham became a focus for leisure and recreation purposes in the 19th and 20th centuries, and contained two of the nine early cinemas in Reading. In 1911, the Glendale Cinema on Church Street opened as the Electric Theatre, closing in 1977. The building still exists today, now in use as a church. The second cinema, known as The Regal Cinema and operating on part of the Site from 1938, was demolished following its closure in 1958. The Regal Cinema featured a 35-foot proscenium, and was considered the largest of the local cinemas by virtue of this feature. This development lacked the detailing of the Glendale Cinema (see Figure 3.11), and its unsympathetic scale, massing and un-fenestrated façade would have been uncharacteristic of the local area.



Figure 3.11: The Regal Cinema and the Glendale Cinema, both undated.

- 3.13 Following the demolition of the Regal Cinema, the Site was redeveloped during the 1960s to accommodate the existing residential and commercial block, with a car park formed to the rear of the buildings, and an archway between blocks opposite the

Baptist Free Church providing vehicular access to the car park from Church Street (Figures 3.12 and 3.13).

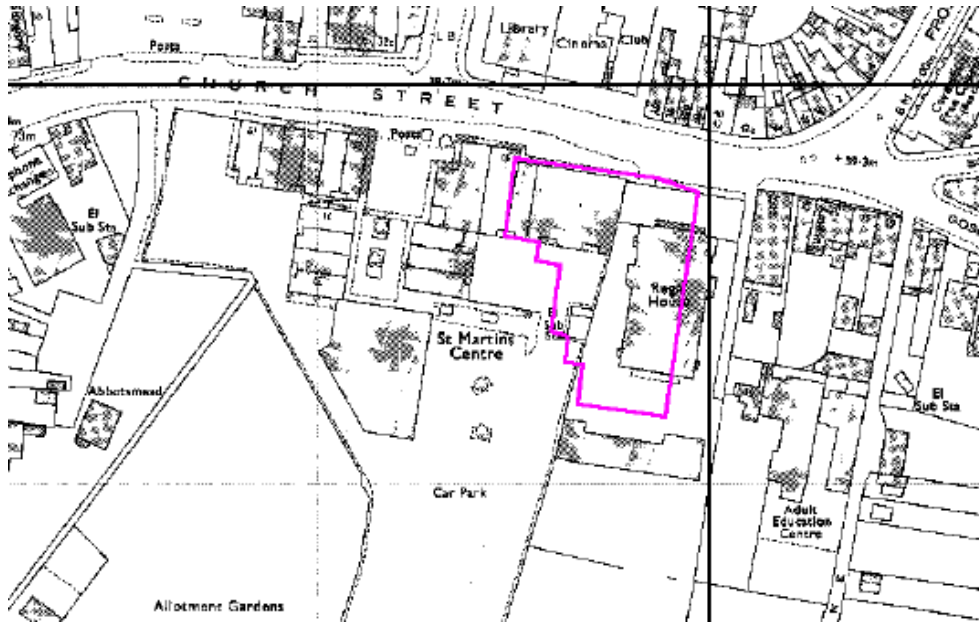


Figure 3.12: OS Map 1970-1975, with indicative Site boundary in pink.

- 3.14 In the 1980s, a Waitrose store was developed to the northeast of the Site (Figure 3.13). Block F of the St Martin's Centre is finished in tile, consistent with the local vernacular style, but does not feature traditional roof forms, and the pattern of fenestration combined with the prominent fascia boards are not typical of the area.



Figure 3.13: The existing buildings on the Site

- 3.15 In 2007, the applicant acquired the Site, and undertook works including the refurbishment of the residential accommodation on the upper floors. In March 2015

planning permission was granted⁵ for a comprehensive scheme involving retail, leisure, residential, public realm, car park and landscape work for the St Martin's Centre (of which the Site forms a part), which is being implemented on a phased basis.

Assessments of Significance

The Free Library (Grade II Listed Building)

Architectural and Historic Interest

- 3.16 The library is located opposite the Site on the north side of Church Street on a corner plot with Hemdean Road to the west. The library adjoins the old cinema, to the east, which is now an evangelical church. To the west of Hemdean Road is a modern two storey block of retail units on the ground floor and accommodation on the first floor.
- 3.17 The library was constructed on land donated by the Caversham businessman and Oxfordshire magistrate William Bullivant Williams (1835-1917) and that the funds for its construction were largely received from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, which had indeed been set-up by Andrew Carnegie for the funding of works for the public good. The architect for the project was determined by competition from a group of seven entrants. The winner was local architect Mr W G Lewton a local architect who had completed many commissions for large houses in Caversham Heights; the Reading Synagogue built in 1900 was one of his public buildings. Accordingly, the building has a degree of local historic interest derived from the strong connections to a prominent local architect and public figure – linked to the fabric and character of the building. This historic interest is amplified by the clear connections to Andrew Carnegie and his funding of a range of public works, most recognisable in the wide range of libraries throughout the UK, reflecting the provision of social infrastructure in rapidly growing urban areas and as a continuation of the 19th century philanthropic tradition.
- 3.18 The List Entry refers to a “sub-Voysey style” inferring characteristics of the work of the prominent and leading Arts and Crafts architect Charles Voysey – perhaps reflected in the picturesque composition and careful use of materials and fine detailing. That being said, the souvenir brochure of the opening ceremony describes the building as being in the “Free Renaissance” style (Cliffe, 2007), which is, perhaps, a more accurate reflection of the idiosyncratic Classical character, typical of Edwardian public buildings and Carnegie Libraries of the period.
- 3.19 The Library is a striking and highly individual building in Church Street and its central tower, cupola, copper clad ball and weathervane with its swan motif are striking features in the local roofscape adding interest and complexity (Figure 3.15). The roofs are multi-gabled and clad with plain clay tiles. The main gabled elevation to the front includes a stone band inscribed “Public Library” and the stone apex above identifies the year of 1907.
- 3.20 The listed building has elevations of typically Reading red brickwork, with cream stone banding and numerous ornate stone embellishments, including the figure of Old Father Time supporting the projecting clock on the front elevation, celebrating its local community function and adding further richness to the overall composition. The main

⁵ Ref.: 140997

entrance is defined by a half round stone roofed portico with Ionic columns and a semi-circular “Diocletian” light above the doors. The windows are set within openings defined by slightly projecting vertical brick pilasters with ornate stone capitals and bracketed stone cills. As a consequence of this richness and elaboration the street elevation is the principal focus of the building (Figure 3.15) when compared to the comparatively plainer side elevations.

- 3.21 The interior of the building appears to retain important elements of historic plan form and some original detailing that amplifies an appreciation and understanding of its historic function and links to the local land owner and the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust.
- 3.22 The building is therefore of architectural interest as a high-quality example of a local public library designed in an idiosyncratic example of an Edwardian civic building designed in a Classical Free Style, which typifies much public architecture of the period. The resultant building is a picturesque composition with high-quality detailing and materiality and detailing, which adds a secondary level of detail and richness. In this instance, architectural interest is also closely linked to the particular historic interest of the listed building.

Contribution made by Setting and the Site to Significance

- 3.23 The Library is set back from the road with the boundary defined by a metal railing set between brick piers with stone ball finials. It is understood that the original railings were taken down during the Second World War with the current arrangement of replacement railings, brick piers and ball finials provided relatively recently. In those terms, the railings, despite their comparatively recent date, contribute positively to the special interest of the listed building by defining the interface between public and private realms as part of the architectural composition.
- 3.24 The setting of the listed building is varied. It includes the main historic route of Church Street, which comprises the principal experiential element of its setting. The townscape context comprises a range of properties of varying character, age (although principally of late 19th and 20th centuries with a small cluster of earlier buildings to the west of the Site in close proximity to the St Peters Conservation Area), quality and function. The prevailing pattern of uses of commercial and retail functions at ground floor creates a vibrant urban character (Figure 3.14).
- 3.25 In the wider context, is a range of late 19th and early 20th century domestic context, which were likely to have utilised the library and are of a broadly complementary character, materiality and scale. In those terms, the contemporaneous 19th and 20th century townscape elements contribute positively to the special interest of the listed building, although the extent of fragmentation of this context on Church Street reduces its relative contribution. The mid-late 20th century townscape elements do not help to understand or enable a better appreciation of the special interest of the listed building and, in some instances, impairs or harms an appreciation of that special interest. In overall terms, given the degree of alteration and fragmentation of the townscape context, setting makes a comparatively limited contribution to the special interest of the listed building.



Figure 3.14: View of Library from the East

- 3.26 The richness and articulated architectural character of the listed building contrasts starkly with the large and relatively plain rendered elevations to the adjoining former cinema to its immediate east. This latter building has substantial massing, related to its historic function, and has the effect of reducing an appreciation of the listed building from the east part of Church Street, where it is the dominant element of the townscape experience. This is further affected by the way that both the listed building and the adjacent church are set back from the frontage of the road. This has the effect of greatly reducing the impact of the Library from the east. Accordingly, this element of the listed building's townscape setting detracts from an appreciation of its special interest.
- 3.27 Due to the pattern of redevelopment along Church Street, the listed building is best appreciated when approached from the west in linear views, where its lively façade forms a greater part of the townscape views due to its location on a corner plot. From the east it is less prominent, and other buildings compete for dominance in the streetscape (Figure 3.14). The heavy vehicular traffic using Church Street introduces significant movement and noise, which undermines an appreciation of the architectural qualities of the exterior of the listed building.
- 3.28 The four and five storey dense developments further to the south of the listed building have effectively constrained the building so that there is no relationship between it and the River Thames. Accordingly, there is no reciprocal relationship with the riparian environment of the riverside and the enclosing built form significantly constrains the experience and appreciation of the listed building in the local townscape.
- 3.29 The St Martin's Centre was re-developed in the mid-late 20th century and has been extended, modernised and improved since construction. It is of a contrasting form and pattern of development, being commercial in character, scale and disposition of built form, which lacks the fine detail and high-quality materiality of the listed building. Aside from the Holm Oak marking the entrance to the retail precinct as complementary element of townscape setting, the existing St Martin's Centre does not help to

appreciate or amplify an appreciation of the particular heritage significance of the listed building.

- 3.30 St Martins Square comprises retail units at ground level with one-two storeys of residential accommodation above, set around a front paved courtyard with several mature trees. The Site is now associated with the Waitrose store (developed to north-east of the Site in the late 20th century). These wider 20th century developments have substantially altered the character and built form of this area of Church Street, dramatically changing the street scene, with a stark contrast between the listed building and the modern form and character of the Site. This strength of contrast is amplified by the non-descript architectural quality, squat proportions and comparatively plain materiality.
- 3.31 Due to the narrow width of Church Street, it is difficult to appreciate the Site and the Library within the same view: the best facing view of the Library is found when standing with one's back to the Site when it is possible to appreciate the picturesque composition and roofscape as well as the richness of the main entrance (Figure 3.15). There are no designed views out of the library, and incidental views from within this building take in a range of 20th and 21st century architecture, of varying quality, which do not help to understand an appreciation of its particular heritage significance or its historic and ongoing function.



Figure 3.15: Free Library viewed from the Site

- 3.32 In overall terms, the Site makes, at best, a neutral contribution to the special interest of the listed building and, in some ways, detracts from an appreciation of that special interest as an element of its varied townscape setting. This is a consequence of the

juxtaposition of the Site's comparatively plain character and non-descript materiality against the rich, eclectic character and soft red brick of the listed building (Figure 3.15).

The Free Church and former West Memorial Hall (Grade II Listed Buildings)

Architectural and Historic Interest

- 3.33 The Caversham Baptist Free Church is located on the east side of Prospect Street on a corner plot with South Street, which is directly north-east of the Site. The West Memorial Hall is located to the south side of Gosbrook Road, to the east of the Site and almost opposite Caversham Baptist Free Church (Figure 3.16).



Figure 3.16: Caversham Free Baptist Church

- 3.34 The Caversham Baptist Free Church was built in 1876-7 and designed by the eminent and prolific Victorian Architect Alfred Waterhouse (1830-1905) for Ebenezer West for whom he had already designed the West Memorial Hall (Figure 3.17) and his Amersham Hall School for Nonconformist Boys. The former West Memorial Hall was also designed by Waterhouse 1865-66 and therefore predates the church.



Figure 3.17: The Waterhouse, formerly the West Memorial Hall

- 3.35 Alfred Waterhouse was a leading proponent of the Gothic Revival movement and he designed a range of nationally significant buildings in that style, such as the Manchester Town Hall; the National Liberal Club; the headquarters of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors; and, the Natural History Museum. Alfred Waterhouse has strong local connections to Reading, following his purchase of a plot of land in Whiteknights Park, where he built his family home of Foxhill. As a result of

Waterhouses' connections to Reading, there are several remaining Waterhouse designed buildings within the local area including Reading School (1865-71); Reading Town Hall (1872-75); and, East Thorpe (1880-82). Alfred Waterhouse is without doubt one of the most important and influential architects of his generation – in an 1887 poll by Building News to select the leading British architect he secured 90 percent of the votes⁶. These strong historic associations with a leading 19th century architect, well-documented and tangibly linked to building fabric is the basis of the listed buildings' historic interest and amplifies their overall heritage significance.

- 3.36 The historic interest of both buildings is also derived from what they illustrate through the provision of social infrastructure in rapidly growing urban areas. The conversion of the former West Memorial Hall to residential use, and the cessation of its original function, has reduced this aspect of historic interest.

- 3.37 The Caversham Baptist Free Church occupies a sharply tapering plot to the north-east of the Site defined by Prospect Street to the west and South Street having a broadly southwest-northeast alignment. It creates a local landmark in the townscape and dominates the eastwards views along much of Church Street. It has a rectangular plan with a steeply pitched tile clad roof and central ridge, with an almost square section tower to the southwest corner. There is projecting entrance to the southwest elevation with gabled roof over a pointed arched stone lined doorway. Above this is a brick pointed relieving arch enclosing three lancet windows, the two outer lights being shorter than the central light. The west and east elevations comprise double stone lancet windows separated by brick buttresses. The predominantly red brickwork is lifted by bands and details in contrasting light buff brickwork to all elevations. The northeastern gabled elevation includes a large central circular stonework "rose" window comprising a central round light encircled by six matching circular lights creating. The elevation being completed with contrasting brick bands.

- 3.38 The overall result is a comparatively austere but high-quality example of a High Victorian Gothic Revival urban church. Its character and disposition of mass is reflective of the architect's response to a challenging site and liturgical requirements. It is an imposing building in the local townscape context, which utilises its form and massing to define an important street junction

- 3.39 The former West Memorial Hall is broadly rectangular plan with a north-south alignment. It has a steeply pitched gabled tiled roof with a central ridge and club crested ridge tiles. The gable to the south supports a central brick chimney stack. The front (north) elevation is in red facing brickwork with some bands of contrasting brickwork, with a projecting, gabled entrance and arched doorway, and small hipped roofed projection to the northwest corner with high level door and external steps. There is a modest stone circular "rose" window within the elevation comprising a small circular centre light encircled by five larger circular lights. This feature was recreated with some modifications within the north elevation of the subsequent Church. The side elevations are supported by brick buttresses designed to "fly" over a ground level access pathway with brick pointed arched heads. As recorded in the list entry the building was extended to the north in 1911 with a rectangular addition having steeply pitched roof, and is of a complementary character.

⁶ Halliday, S., 2003. Making the Metropolis. First ed. Derby: The Breedon Books Publishing

- 3.40 The former West Memorial Hall is an attractive and high-quality Gothic Revival building of a domestic scale that utilises carefully selected detailing and materials to result in an informal composition.
- 3.41 The former West Memorial Hall and the Free Church were built to designs by Alfred Waterhouse and are reflective of his established and mature Gothic Revival style, with liberal use of ornate terracotta, red brick and polychromatic materials. Together, these assets form part of Waterhouse's Reading legacy. Accordingly, both buildings are of a high architectural quality.

Contribution made by Setting and the Site to Significance

- 3.42 The setting of the listed buildings is varied. It includes the main historic routes of Church Street / Prospect Street / South Street / Gosbrook Road), which comprises the principal experiential element of its setting. The townscape context comprises a range of properties of varying character, age (although principally of late-19th and 20th centuries), quality and function. The prevailing pattern of uses of commercial and retail functions at ground floor along Church Street and Prospect Street, which creates a vibrant urban character, whilst the context to the east is predominantly residential and domestic.
- 3.43 In the wider context, is a range of late-19th and early-20th century context, which were likely to have utilised the church and hall and are of a broadly complementary character, materiality and scale. In those terms, the contemporaneous 19th and 20th century townscape elements contribute positively to the special interest of the listed buildings, with the domestic townscape surviving to a greater extent and providing a broadly complementary and consistent townscape context. The extent of fragmentation of this context on Church Street reduces its relative contribution to an understanding of their respective special interest. The mid-late 20th century townscape elements do not help to understand or enable a better appreciation of the special interest of the listed building and, in some instances, impairs or harms an appreciation of that special interest.
- 3.44 As noted earlier, the church forms a local landmark that defines an important street junction and is particularly prominent in eastward views along Church Street and looking south in elevated prospects along Prospect Street. Together the buildings form a harmonious group, with the shared architectural character and materiality amplifying their individual architectural interest.
- 3.45 The Site has limited visual interaction with the Free Church, which is physically separated from the Site by a busy traffic junction. This discourages lingering at the Church Street/South Street elevation of the church, from where views of the Site can be had. In those terms, the noise and activity associated with the vehicular traffic detracts from the ability to understand or appreciate the significance of the listed buildings as part of the experience of their townscape setting.
- 3.46 The Site is part of the mid/late-20th century townscape context of the listed buildings. The buildings within the Site are nondescript in quality and materiality and are, in those terms, recessive elements of the varied townscape setting. Due to separating distances and interposing built form, the Site does not impair an understanding of their particular significance or role in the wider townscape context, nor do they better reveal

or assist in understanding that significance. In those terms, the Site is a neutral element of the listed building's respective settings.

St Peters Conservation Area

Character or Appearance

- 3.47 This assessment of significance is informed by the adopted and emerging conservation area appraisals.
- 3.48 To the west of the Site is the St Peters Conservation Area, which is centred on St Peters Church, Caversham Court and St Peters Rectory. The St Peters Conservation Area is located c.1km north of Reading town centre and to the west of Caversham village centre. It is centred on St Peters Church, Caversham Court and St Peters Rectory and properties fronting Church Road, Caversham and St Peters Hill. Its southern boundary is marked by the River Thames. The history and character of the area are inextricably tied up with the history of St Peters Church and Caversham Court.



Figure 3.18: St Peters Conservation Area

- 3.49 The built form reflects the historic origins of the settlement at the bridgehead over the River Thames. A core of listed 16th and 17th century village buildings creates a two-storey scale. The irregular building line along the road, often at or close to the back of the footpath, and its winding character leading up to St Peters Hill, reflects the historic village. The early village is overlaid with mainly late Victorian and Edwardian buildings, constructed over a short time period. Early red brick and timber framed domestic buildings with plain roof tiles combine with well-detailed later brick buildings with slate roofs form a coherent whole and an attractive and consistent roofscape (Figure 3.18).
- 3.50 The primary building materials are red brick and flint (Figure 3.18), and the presence of mature trees contributes to a spacious, village character (3.19). The area generally also retains linking features such as flint walls and tree cover essential to the overall character and appearance of the area. There is, therefore, an architectural and historical unity to this part of Church Road/St Peters Hill, which has a spacious village feel to it. This is enhanced by the winding nature of the road and a variable building line along the road. The use of red brick and flint as main building materials, including boundary walls, and a preponderance of old tile roofs also serve to unify the area.



Figure 3.19: View south along The Warren from St Peter's Hill.

- 3.51 St Peters Church and Caversham Court (Figure 3.20) form the centre of the conservation area, and historically these sites dominated the area, in socioeconomic terms. A great deal of historical significance is derived from these assets, which also provide a substantial area of green space, overlooking the River Thames. At the conservation area's historic core, the buildings in the vicinity of the Church and Caversham Court contribute to the historic, village character and appearance of the conservation area. The informal plot layout along the meandering Church Road and St Peters Hill communicates the origins of the area as a farming community, developed and extended on an ad-hoc basis.



Figure 3.20: St Peters Church and Caversham Court

- 3.52 St Peters Church and Caversham Court (Figure 3.20) also represent a significant area of open space forming the very heart of the conservation area, which is enhanced by its location immediately adjoining the River Thames. This space is, however, also

enhanced by substantial tree cover, including some specimen trees within Caversham Court. In general terms, tree cover and green spaces, especially around St Peters and in Caversham Court, with specimen trees in the latter, are important. Individual street trees and those in gardens also contribute strongly to the area.

- 3.53 The adopted conservation area appraisal (2009) identifies the following general characteristics of the conservation area:

Positive Elements of Character

- Retention of original buildings and their settings with few detrimental changes by way of new development and/or addition of non-traditional materials;
- Retention of original brick and flint walls and/or railings (original and replacement) throughout the area;
- Good tree cover within the grounds of individual properties and throughout the area; and
- Street trees in parts of Church Road.

Negative Elements of Character

- Heavily trafficked route through the centre of the conservation area;
- Some (limited) use of non-traditional materials: e.g. uPVC windows;
- Some (limited) loss of original brick and flint walls and/or railings e.g. replacement of railings with newer brick walls and/or timber fencing;
- Some walls in need of repair;
- Whilst not inherently unattractive in itself, some overgrowth of railings with hedges;
- Lack of traditional street furniture, including street lighting;
- Over-reliance on individual telegraph poles throughout the area with attendant wires radiating out to the houses within it; and
- Some views in to and of the Conservation Area to modern, sometimes poor quality developments.

Contribution made by Setting and the Site to Significance

- 3.54 The existing boundaries of the conservation area are tightly defined. The Site is located in a varied townscape context comprising the expanded settlement of Caversham, comprising vernacular properties and more recent later 19th and 20th century development. Not all elements of setting will, therefore, make a positive contribution to the significance of the conservation area.

- 3.55 The heavily-wooded ridge above the Thames providing a green backdrop to the conservation is crucial in views into it from across the river, particularly from Caversham Bridge and the Thames Promenade, where it helps in understanding the historic origins of the conservation area as a rural settlement. In addition, an appreciation of the riparian character and relationship to the River Thames, including reciprocal views of the river and Caversham Bridge from Caversham Court Gardens, and contribute positively to an understanding of the conservation area's origins as a settlement located at a bridgehead and the importance to the siting and function of the former Caversham Court. These are important, positive elements of setting.
- 3.56 The form of the original bridgehead village is still apparent: Bridge Street runs north from the bridge to the T-junction with Church Road (to Oxford) and Church St (to Henley) and there is a range of vernacular at eastern entrance to the conservation area, reflecting these historic origins⁷. The current high traffic volumes reflect this original function although the associated noise and activity detract from an appreciation of this historic function in the approach to the conservation area. The junction of Church Road and Bridge Street includes some distinguished 20th century banks and similar commercial premises – although the telephone exchange is a substantial functional building. While the commercial buildings raise the predominant scale to three storeys, there is a harmony of scale and materials between these buildings and those located within the conservation area and contribute positively to its significance as an element of its townscape setting.
- 3.57 The townscape context to the east of the conservation area is more variable and reflects the extent of late 19th and 20th century development of a range of building types, character and quality. The later 19th and early 20th century built form is of a complementary scale, character and materiality, which reflects the character of the conservation area, however, the later 20th century elements have introduced contrasting forms of development, materiality and character. As a consequence of the degree of alteration and variation in this townscape context this eastern townscape context on Church Street does not, in overall terms, contribute positively to the understanding or appreciation of the significance of the conservation area.
- 3.58 The buildings within the Site are nondescript in quality and materiality and are, in those terms, recessive elements of the varied townscape setting. Due to separating distances and interposing built form, the Site does not better reveal or assist in understanding that significance. In those terms, the Site is a neutral element of the listed building's respective settings.

⁷ Proposed for inclusion in the amended conservation area boundary (2018)

4. Application Proposal and Heritage Impact Assessment

Introduction

- 4.1 The relevant heritage policy and guidance context for consideration of the proposed development is set out in full in Appendix 2. This includes:
- the statutory duties of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 including the requirement to pay special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of a listed building;
 - national policy set out in the Framework; and
 - local policy for the historic environment and other relevant material considerations.
- 4.2 In accordance with the requirements of the Framework, the significance, including the contribution made by setting to the significance of the identified heritage assets, has been described at Section 3.
- 4.3 The Framework sets out that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of heritage assets that may be affected by proposals. They should take this assessment into account when considering the effect of proposals in order to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.
- 4.4 Importantly, account should be taken of: the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 4.5 The Framework also highlights that when considering the impact of proposals on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to their conservation, and the more important the asset the greater the weight should be.
- 4.6 Local planning authorities are also encouraged to look for opportunities for new development within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of a heritage asset should be treated favourably.
- 4.7 The following impact assessment is made in light of; the statutory duty with respect to listed buildings and setting; national and local policy for the historic environment;

national guidance; and, Historic England's specific guidance in relation to heritage assets and setting.⁸

Scheme Proposal

- 4.8 The applicant has previously submitted a full planning application for a mixed use development on the Site.⁹ The Site, as previously outlined in Section 2, is located within the vicinity of a small number of designated heritage assets. This proposal is part of a previously approved scheme which has since been approached as a phased development. The initial phase, comprising public realm works, has been enacted, and the scheme proposal should be viewed in conjunction with this work.
- 4.9 This application proposes to extend the existing building, and construct a mixed-use scheme comprising A3 uses, retail, leisure/cinema and residential units, with retail and restaurant uses at ground floor level (in orange and red respectively on Figure 4.1), leisure uses on the first and second floors, and residential units on the third floor.



Figure 4.1: Proposed Site plan

⁸ Historic England, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (Second Edition), 2017

⁹ Ref: 2797/16

Impact Assessment

- 4.10 The following impact assessment is made in light of the statutory duty with respect to listed buildings and setting; national and local policy for the historic environment; national guidance; and, Historic England's specific guidance in relation to heritage assets and setting.¹⁰
- 4.11 In considering the effects of the proposed development upon the significance of the identified designated heritage assets, it is important to note that this potential impact is indirect in nature, arising from impact on their setting. Setting is not a heritage asset and not a heritage designation. Its importance lies in what it may, or may not, contribute to the significance of a heritage asset.

Principle of Development

- 4.12 It has been demonstrated in Section 3 that the existing buildings on Site do not contribute positively to the particular significance of the relevant listed buildings and the St Peters Conservation Area (Figure 4.2). Accordingly, there is no policy presumption, in heritage terms, for the retention of the existing buildings or spaces within the Site. Moreover, the recent planning history¹¹ demonstrates the acceptability of demolishing the existing buildings and a significant change in character, as part of a wider scheme.



Figure 4.2: Site and environs as existing

The Free Library (Grade II Listed Building)

- 4.13 Church Street, on which the Free Library is located, comprises a mix of architectural character, periods and uses. The listed building is a local landmark within this otherwise variable townscape, particularly in views from the west, due to the building's corner plot and picturesque roofscape. The original setting of the library has been substantially altered by the 20th century developments in this area of Caversham.

¹⁰ Historic England, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets, 2017

¹¹ Ref.: 140997

- 4.14 The proposed scale and massing of the scheme proposals is consistent with that of the previously approved scheme, which established the acceptability of further reinforcing the contrasting character of the southern side of Church Street to that on the northern side. Whilst there will be a material change in scale and massing as a consequence of the proposed scheme this will be consistent with the existing and emerging wider townscape context. The building is arranged to express the retail frontage at ground and first floors, consistent with the character of the wider townscape setting of the listed building with the roofscape articulated via recessive roof storeys (Figure 4.3). Moreover, the scheme is of a higher architectural quality than the existing buildings and will better reflect the local materiality and with a better-articulated primary façade with depth and richness to the Church Street elevation.



Figure 4.3: CGI of Proposed Church Street Elevation

- 4.15 Due to the scheme's siting on the south side of Church Street and the variable 20th century context in which it is located, it will form a complementary element of listed building's variable townscape setting. It will not impede or impair an ability to appreciate or understand the particular significance of the listed building in terms of its architectural quality in the townscape, notably when viewed along Church Street, or the relationship to positive elements of setting, such as the complementary domestic townscape setting to the north. Moreover, the proposed scheme will not impact on any views out of the listed building that contribute positively to the significance of the listed building. The arcade to the street elevation will provide an improved streetscape context on the south side of Church Street in which to appreciate the principal elevation, when compared to the existing unattractive canopy.
- 4.16 In overall terms, the Site does not contribute positively to the special interest of the listed building as an element of its variable townscape setting, which makes a minor contribution to its special interest. The proposed scheme will not impact on appreciation or understanding of the special interest listed building or any positively contributing elements of setting as a historic community library. The enhancement of the street-facing façade will deliver a minor heritage benefit, by improving the setting of the Library through the introduction of a more sympathetic material palette and overall better design quality. In overall terms, the special interest of the listed building will be preserved.

The Free Church and former West Memorial Hall (Grade II Listed Buildings)

- 4.17 The Site currently is a neutral element in the wider setting of the listed buildings, with limited visual interaction due to the intervening junction at Church Street and South Street and no historic connections or functional associations.
- 4.18 There will be a minor alteration in a localised part of the wider setting of the Free Church as a result of the Scheme proposal. The scheme will replace the existing non-descript building with a high-quality building as part of the varied commercial 20th century townscape on the south side of Church Street. The height and massing of the proposed development will be consistent with that of the wider approved scheme of the St Martin's Centre and will help to establish a consistent and well-defined street frontage that will improve the approach to the listed buildings from the west as part of the much-altered streetscape of Church Street. Importantly, it will not compete or interfere with an appreciation of the significance of the church as a local landmark defining an important street junction given the relative disposition of built form and separating distances; the church tower, front entrance and substantial roof will continue to draw the eye in approaches from the east and south.
- 4.19 Due to separating distances and interposing built form, the scheme proposal will not impact on an appreciation of the architectural and historic interest of the listed building of the former West Memorial Hall as a high-quality example of High-Victorian Gothic Revival architecture.
- 4.20 Moreover, the reciprocal relationship between the listed buildings and the positive elements of setting, reflecting their original functions as spiritual hubs for the local community, will remain unchanged by the proposed development. Consequently, the legibility of these buildings as centres for community activities, albeit now a former connection in the case of the former West Memorial Hall, will remain clear and legible.
- 4.21 Accordingly, the respective special interest of the listed buildings will be preserved by the proposed development.

St Peters Conservation Area

- 4.22 The special interest of the St Peters Conservation Area is derived, primarily, from the history of St Peters Church and Caversham Court. Additionally, the conservation area contains a number of 17th-19th century listed buildings, forming a distinct historic core and retaining its legibility as a historic village. It has been established in Section 3 that the Site does not contribute positively to the significance of the conservation area as an element of setting.
- 4.23 The Site is located outside of the designated boundary of the conservation area (and the suggested boundary amendments contained within the draft Conservation Area Appraisal (2018)). Accordingly, any impact will be indirect via change in a localised part of the extensive and varied setting of the conservation area.
- 4.24 Due to the nature of separating distances, interposing built form; the scale, height and mass of the proposed development; and, in the context of the previously approved redevelopment of the St Martin's Centre, the proposed development will have no impact on the character or appearance of the conservation area. Moreover, for the same reasons, the proposed development will have no impact on an understanding or

experience of positively contributing elements of setting, such as the reciprocal relationship with the riparian character and views of the River Thames or the approach from the south over Caversham Bridge (also proposed for designation as part of the draft conservation area appraisal (2018)).

- 4.25 Accordingly, the proposed development will preserve the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Review against Heritage Legislation, Policy and Guidance

Statutory Duties

- 4.26 Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Section 66 imposes a “General duty as respects listed buildings in the exercise of planning functions.” Subsection (1) provides:

“In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”

- 4.27 It has been confirmed¹² that Parliament’s intention in enacting section 66(1) was that decision-makers should give “considerable importance and weight” to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings, where “preserve” means to “to do no harm” (after South Lakeland). These duties, and the appropriate weight to be afforded to them, must be at the forefront of the decision makers mind when considering any harm that may accrue and the balancing of such harm against public benefits as required by national planning policy. The Secretary of State has confirmed¹³ that ‘considerable importance and weight’ is not synonymous with ‘overriding importance and weight’.
- 4.28 There is no statutory duty relating to the setting of a conservation area.
- 4.29 This report demonstrates that the scheme proposed development will preserve the respective special interest of the grade II listed Free Library, the Free Church, and the former West Memorial Hall. Accordingly, the requirements of the relevant statutory duty of the Act will be satisfied by the proposed development.

National Planning Policy Framework 2018

- 4.30 Paragraph 189 outlines the information required to support planning applications affecting heritage assets, stating that applicants should provide a description of the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting; this Heritage Statement fulfils the requirements of Paragraph. This report also supports the Council in their fulfilment of the duties set out in Paragraph 190, which states that local planning authorities should take account of the significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal.

¹² Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Limited and (1) East Northamptonshire District Council (2) English Heritage (3) National Trust (4) The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Governments, Case No: C1/2013/0843, 18th February 2014

¹³ APP/H1705/A/13/2205929

- 4.31 Paragraph 192 requires that local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, putting them into viable uses consistent with their conservation, as well as the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. The architectural quality, material, scale and massing of the proposed development ensures that the particular heritage significance of the relevant heritage assets will be sustained (i.e. preserved).
- 4.32 Paragraph 193 regards the determination of applications affecting designated heritage assets. It outlines that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation when considering the impact of a proposed development on the asset's significance, in proportion to the significance of the asset. Consequently, this report sets out the extent of the Site's significance, and the contribution it makes to the setting of the nearby listed buildings. Paragraph 194 goes on to specify that any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. The scheme proposal will sustain the significance of the relevant heritage assets (i.e. result in no harm or loss of significance). Accordingly, Paragraph 193 would be satisfied, and Paragraphs 194-196 of the Framework are not engaged.
- 4.33 Paragraph 200 of the Framework states that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or 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. The proposed development will sustain the contribution made by setting to the particular heritage significance of the listed buildings and conservation area.

The Reading Local Plan

- 4.34 The Reading Local Plan consists of the Core Strategy (2009 and amended January 2015) and Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012 and amended January 2015), addressed below. The Council is in the early stages of replacing the Local Plan, and so the draft documents are of no weight in determining the proposed development.

Core Strategy (2015)

- 4.35 The Core Strategy was adopted on 29th January 2008 and subsequently amended in January 2015 (with regard to affordable housing policies). It forms a key component of the planning framework used for determining applications. The following policies relate to the proposals in respect of issues of design and heritage.
- 4.36 Policy CS7 relates to general design quality. It requires all development to be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The scheme proposal is in accordance with the objectives of this policy by sustaining the particular heritage significance of the listed buildings and conservation area.
- 4.37 The scheme proposal also complies with Policy CS33, which requires that elements of the historic environment (including their settings) should be protected and, where appropriate, enhanced. The policy also states that planning permission will be granted where development has no adverse impact on historic assets and their settings.

Reading Borough Council Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2015)

- 4.38 The SDPD was adopted on 23rd October 2012 (and amended in January 2015), alongside the Reading Borough Proposals Map. It sets out detailed policies for use in decisions on planning applications and identifies sites for development, protection and for the application of specific policies. At Paragraph 9.1.9, the document states that the Framework provides an appropriate basis for determining applications for planning permission where they would affect the historic environment. Accordingly, together with the guidance in Policy CS33 of the Core Strategy, there is no need to provide specific detailed policies in the SDPD. As demonstrated in this Section, the proposed development complies with the relevant objective of the Framework and Policy CS33.

Summary of Heritage Impact Assessment

- 4.39 It has been demonstrated in this Section, that the proposed development will preserve the special interest of the relevant listed buildings and the character or appearance of the conservation area, including the contribution made by setting to that significance. In that regard, the proposed development would satisfy the relevant statutory duty of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990; paragraphs 189, 192, 193 and 200 of the Framework 2018; the relevant policies of the Reading Borough Council Core Strategy 2015, the Reading Borough Council Sites and Detailed Policy Document 2015; and, other material considerations.

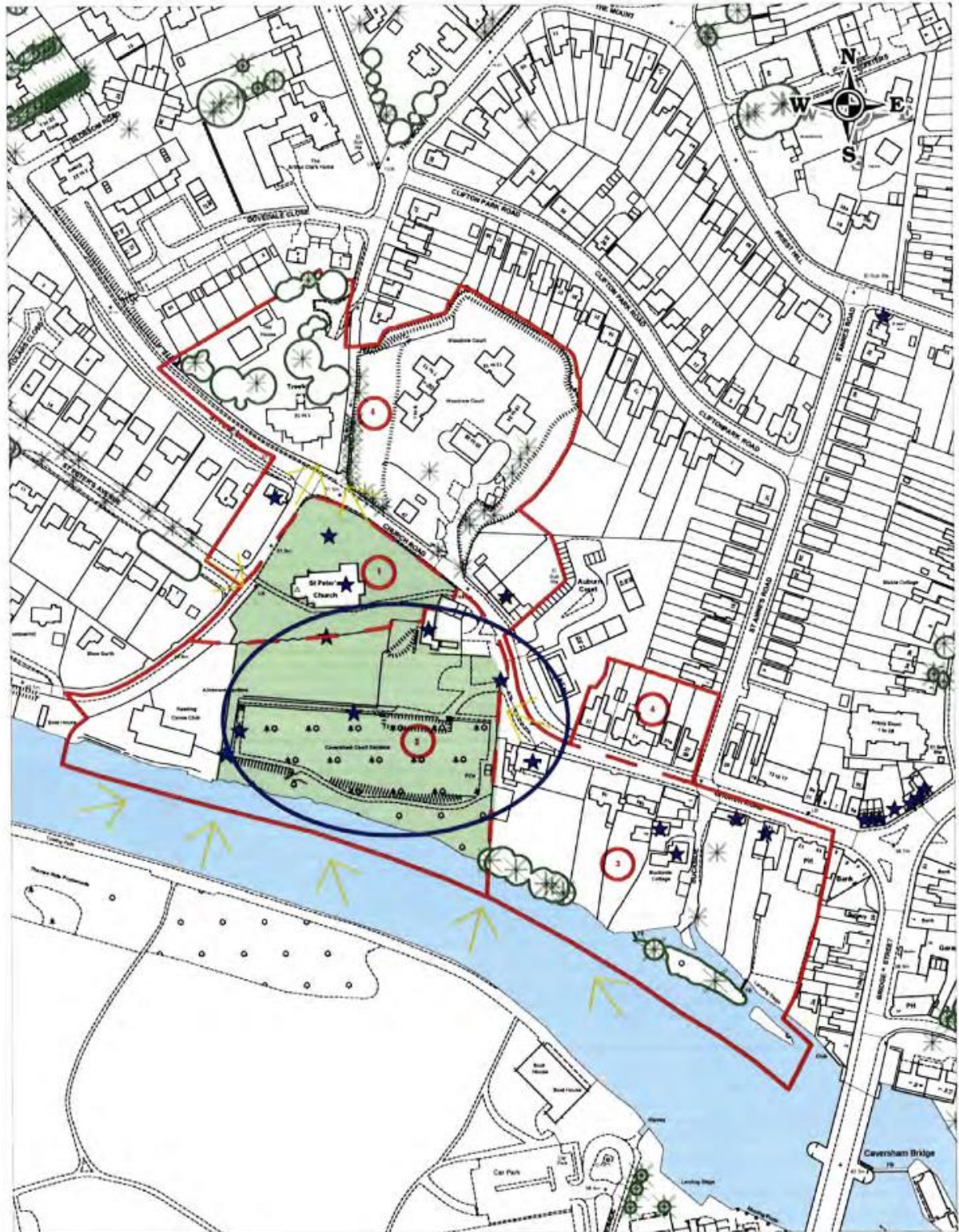
5. Summary and Conclusions

- 5.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Turley Heritage on behalf of Hermes Property Unit Trust to provide relevant and proportionate information to the local planning authority with regard to the heritage impacts associated with an application for full planning permission for:

“A mixed-use development involving A3 uses, retail, leisure/cinema and residential units ... submitted in support of a full planning application to Reading Borough Council for Block F of the St Martins Centre.”

- 5.2 The Site comprises a later 20th century retail unit with an arcaded walkway fronting Church Street and ancillary space to the rear.
- 5.3 As established in **Section 2**, the relevant heritage assets for the purposes of this report are the grade II listed buildings (the Caversham Free Public Library, the Caversham Baptist Free Church and Caversham’s West Memorial Hall) (see Figure 1.1) and the St Peters Conservation Area.
- 5.4 **Section 3** demonstrates that the Site forms part of the variable townscape context of the heritage assets, derived from the late 19th century and early 20th century expansion of Caversham and the subsequent mid-late 20th commercial development. The assessment contained in **Section 3** confirms that the Site in its existing condition does not contribute positively to the particular significance of the relevant heritage assets as an element of their variable townscape settings.
- 5.5 **Section 4** assesses the impact of the proposed development upon the significance of the relevant heritage assets. The analysis contained in that section demonstrates that the proposed development will sustain the significance of the relevant heritage assets, including the contribution made by setting to that significance.
- 5.6 Accordingly, the proposed development will preserve the special interest of the relevant listed buildings and the character or appearance of the conservation area, including the contribution made by setting to that significance. In that regard, the proposed development would satisfy the relevant statutory duty of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990; paragraphs 189, 192, 193 and 200 of the Framework; the relevant policies of the Reading Borough Council Core Strategy 2015, the Reading Borough Council Sites and Detailed Policy Document 2015; and, other material considerations. The draft Conservation Area Appraisal for the St Peters Conservation Area, in addition to the adopted 2009 appraisal, has also been considered.

Appendix 1: Conservation Area Map



TITLE St Peter's Conservation Area

- 1 St Peter's Church and Churchyard
- 2 Caversham Court
- 3 The south side of Church Road
- 4 The north side of Church Road / St Peter's Hill

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Appendix 2: List Entries

Caversham Free Public Library

Caversham Free Baptist Church

West Memorial Hall

CAVERSHAM FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

List Entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: CAVERSHAM FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

List entry Number: 1113456

Location

CAVERSHAM FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY, CHURCH STREET

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:

District: Reading

District Type: Unitary Authority

Parish:

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 14-Dec-1978

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 38884

Asset Groupings

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List entry Description

Summary of Building

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Reasons for Designation

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

History

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Details

CHURCH STREET 1. 5128 Caversham Caversham Free Public Library SU 7174 11/455 II 2. Foundation stone laid 23.iiij 1907. Site given by Andrew Carnegie. Architect possibly F W Albury. Irregular red brick and stone sub-Voysey style with tiled roof. Asymmetrically disposed gables - one with inscription, other with date - flanking off centre tower which has pylon corner piers, and which is capped by ball finials and a small copper domed stair turret. Entrance in tower with large columns. Above is an Atlas figure (signed B L) supporting a clock. 3 windows in all, 3, 1 and 2 lights with dividing pilasters of alternate stone and brick and floral caps. Memorial tablet in marbled lobby. 3 window return to Hemdean Road. Interior altered.

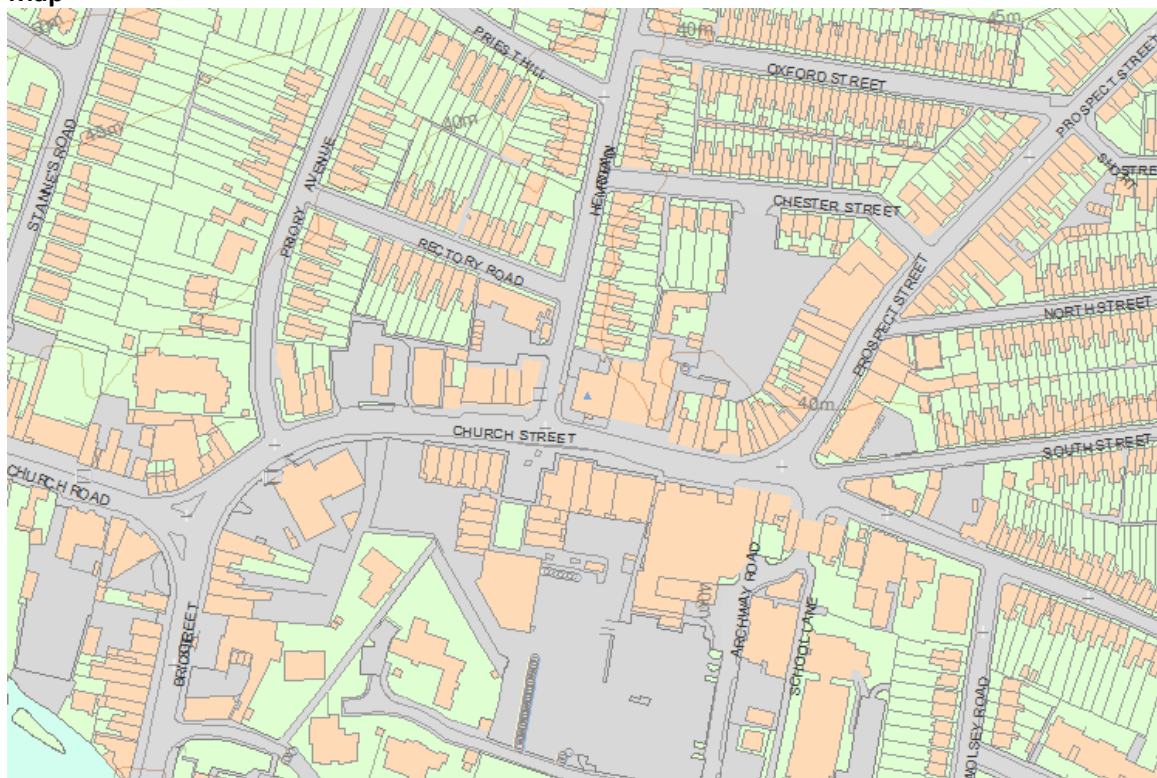
Listing NGR: SU7134974812

Selected Sources

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details

National Grid Reference: SU 71349 74812

Map



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The PDF will be generated from our live systems and may take a few minutes to download depending on how busy our servers are. We apologise for this delay.

This copy shows the entry on 28-Feb-2018 at 04:42:09.

End of official listing

CAVERSHAM BAPTIST FREE CHURCH

List Entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: CAVERSHAM BAPTIST FREE CHURCH

List entry Number: 1113562

Location

CAVERSHAM BAPTIST FREE CHURCH, PROSPECT STREET

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:

District: Reading

District Type: Unitary Authority

Parish:

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 14-Dec-1978

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 39131

Asset Groupings

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List entry Description

Summary of Building

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Reasons for Designation

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

History

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Details

PROSPECT STREET 1. 5128 Caversham Caversham Baptist Free Church SU 7174 11/266a II 2. 1875-77. Alfred Waterhouse architect. Difficult corner site, Gothic style. 6 bay rain hall to Prospect Street, 2 stage tower to south-west (corner) angle and gable end front to south. Red brick with stone capped plinth and inner window reveals. Grey blue decoration (to south front). Banded tile roof. West front: paired lancets with separating buttresses (containing tumbled brickwork), the 2 right hand bays have lower windows with herring bone and decorative infill. Corbelled brick eaves cornice in 2 layers. Small 2 bay projection to north. Tower has chamfered corners, 2 tall stages and a decorative upper stage; capped by tall hipped roof with weathervane. South front: stepped triple lancet with over arch and decorative infill below; central gabled porch with flanking lean-to annexes. Punched lozenges in gable and in kneeler to right. The interior has been well maintained. Low brick wall angled to corner site fronts South Street, stone chamfered capping. This building is included as a good example of Waterhouse's use of materials with brick, stone and roof tiles of different colours.

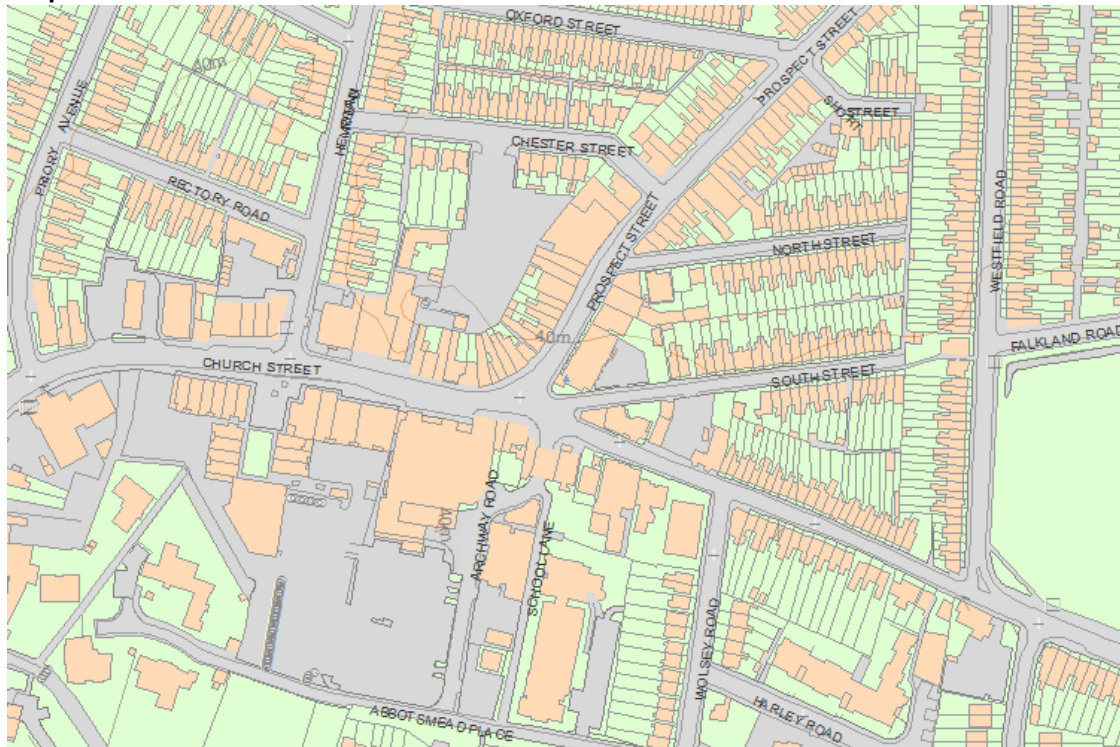
Listing NGR: SU7145374790

Selected Sources

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details

National Grid Reference: SU 71453 74790

Map



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This copy shows the entry on 28-Feb-2018 at 04:42:14.

End of official listing

WEST MEMORIAL HALL

List Entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: WEST MEMORIAL HALL

List entry Number: 1321953

Location

WEST MEMORIAL HALL, GOSBROOK ROAD

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:

District: Reading

District Type: Unitary Authority

Parish:

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 14-Dec-1978

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 38961

Asset Groupings

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List entry Description

Summary of Building

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Reasons for Designation

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

History

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Details

GOSBROOK ROAD 1. 5128 (South Side) West Memorial Hall SU 7174 11/494 II 2. 1865-66 by Alfred Waterhouse. Gothic. Red brick former Baptist Free Church, gable end to street. Stone plinth and dressings. Banded tile roof. Blue brick bands in gable above and below rose window. Tumbled brick in chimney to south gable. Blue and red brick herring bone work in tympanum over pair of lancets to left. The main feature is the right hand bay - this has a hipped rectangular stair turret to gallery with external stairs on quadrant wall to base. 4 bay side wall to west with arched passage below buttresses, cogged eaves cornice, paired lancets, except to 1/2 dormer to north. 1911 extension to east with central gable, echoes style of north gable. Interior rearranged. An interesting display of materials.

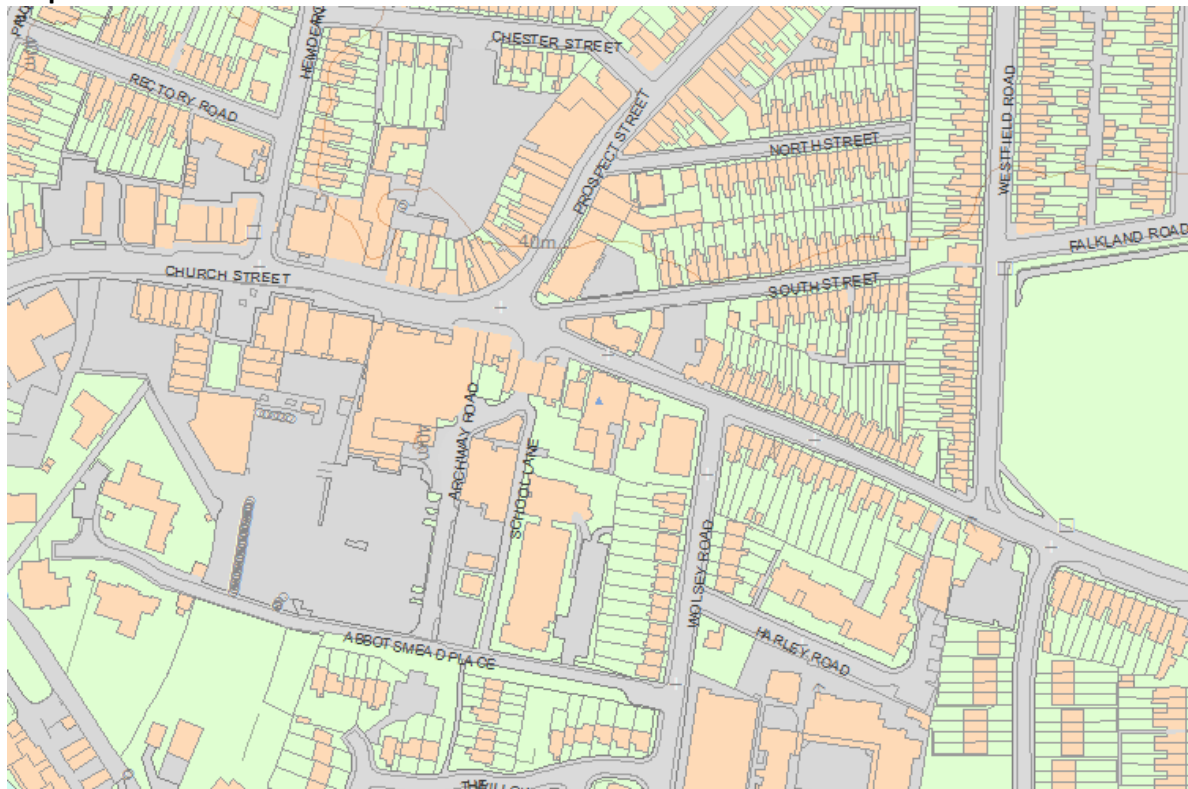
Listing NGR: SU7147374742

Selected Sources

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details

National Grid Reference: SU 71473 74742

Map



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This copy shows the entry on 28-Feb-2018 at 04:42:18.

End of official listing

Appendix 3: Heritage Legislation, Policy and Guidance

Statutory Duties

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides at Section 66 a “General duty as respects listed buildings in the exercise of planning functions.” Subsection (1) provides:

“In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”

With regard to applications for planning permission within conservation areas, the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 outlines in Section 72 that:

“s.72(1) In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any powers under any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.”

Recent case law¹⁴ has confirmed that Parliament’s intention in enacting section 66(1) was that decision-makers should give “considerable importance and weight” to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings, where “preserve” means to “to do no harm” (after South Lakeland). These duties, and the appropriate weight to be afforded to them, must be at the forefront of the decision makers mind when considering any harm that may accrue and the balancing of such harm against public benefits as required by national planning policy. The Secretary of State has confirmed¹⁵ that ‘considerable importance and weight’ is not synonymous with ‘overriding importance and weight’.

Importantly, however, the concept of the setting of a conservation area is not enshrined in the legislation and does not attract the weight of statutory protection¹⁶.

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2018

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was introduced in March 2012 and revised in 2018. It is the full statement of Government planning policies covering all aspects of the planning process. Paragraph 184 of the NPPF 2018 sets out the following statement regarding the government’s principles on conserving heritage assets:

“These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.”

The glossary of the NPPF (Annex 2) defines conservation as the process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.

¹⁴ Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Limited and (1) East Northamptonshire District Council (2) English Heritage (3) National Trust (4) The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Governments, Case No: C1/2013/0843, 18th February 2014

¹⁵ APP/H1705/A/13/2205929

¹⁶ APP/H1705/A/14/2219070

Chapter 16 of the NPPF outlines the Government's guidance regarding conserving and enhancing the historic environment in more detail.

Paragraph 189 requires the significance of the heritage assets, which may be affected by the proposals to be described as part of any submission, ideally as part of a Heritage Statement report. The level of detail should be proportionate to the importance of the assets and sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposals on their significance.

Paragraph 190 sets out that local planning authorities should also identify and assess the particular significance of heritage assets that may be affected by proposals. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of proposals in order to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Paragraph 192 states that local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of all heritage assets and putting them into viable uses consistent with their conservation, the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality, and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraph 193 further outlines that local planning authorities should give great weight to the asset's conservation when considering the impact on a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, such as the listed building and conservation area. The more important the heritage asset, the greater the weight should be. It is also specified that any harm to, or loss, of significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification.

Paragraph 195 outlines that local planning authorities should refuse consent where a proposal will lead to substantial harm or total loss of significance, unless it can be demonstrated that this is necessary to deliver substantial public benefits that outweigh such harm or loss, or a number of other tests can be satisfied.

Paragraph 196 concerns proposals which will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset. Here harm should be weighed against the public benefits, including securing the optimum viable use.

Paragraph 200 encourages local planning authorities to look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and within the setting of heritage assets, such as listed buildings, to enhance or better reveal their significance. It also states that proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of a heritage asset should be treated favourably.

Paragraph 201 states that not all elements of a conservation area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the area should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 133 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 134, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the area or as a whole.

Local Plan

The Reading Local Plan consists of the Core Strategy (2009 and amended January 2015) and Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012 and amended January 2015). The Council is in the process of replacing the Local Plan, but the draft documents are of no weight in determining planning applications.

Core Strategy (2015)

RBC's Core Strategy was adopted on 29th January 2008 and subsequently amended in January 2015 (with regard to affordable housing policies). It forms a key component of the planning framework used for determining applications. The following policies relate to the proposals in respect of issues of design and heritage.

Policy CS7 relates to general design quality. It requires all development to be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. There is an expectation that developments will respond positively to their local context and reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including the protection of the historic environment.

Policy CS33 relates to the protection and enhancement of the historic environment and states that designated heritage assets forming elements of the historic environment, including their setting, should be preserved and enhanced where possible. This includes locally listed buildings.

The proper interpretation of the policy must reflect its intention and the advice in the Framework. For instance, the policy states that planning permission will be granted where development has no adverse impact on historic assets and their settings. As the wording indicates on its face, this policy must be seen as permissive in the sense of explaining that planning permission will be granted in such circumstances, not that planning permission will be refused if there is any adverse impact. The latter contention is not what the policy says and would be contrary to paragraphs 132-135 of the Framework if it did, which requires consideration of any harm, if it does arise, and enables demonstration that in certain circumstances harm to the significance of a heritage asset can be justified.

Reading Borough Council Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2015)

The SDPD was adopted on 23rd October 2012 (the affordable housing policies were amended in January 2015), alongside the Reading Borough Proposals Map. It sets out detailed policies for use in decisions on planning applications and identifies sites for development, protection and for the application of specific policies.

Paragraph 9.1.7 notes that one of the cross-cutting aspects of national policy is proportionality, such that the greater the significance of the heritage asset the greater the presumption is in favour of its conservation. The focus is on conservation and, where appropriate, enhancement. There is acknowledgement that new development may make a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the historic environment.

At Paragraph 9.1.9, the document states that the Framework provides an appropriate basis for determining applications for planning permission where they would affect the historic environment. Accordingly, together with the guidance in Policy CS33 of the Core Strategy, there is no need to provide specific detailed policies in the SDPD.

Other Material Considerations

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) 2014

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) 2014 has been issued by the Government as a web resource, including a category on conserving and enhancing the historic environment. This is intended to provide more detailed guidance and information with regard to the implementation of national policy set out in the Framework 2012.

The NPPG 2014 helps to define some of the key heritage terms used in the Framework. With regard to substantial harm, it is outlined that in general terms this is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special interest. Optimum viable use is defined in the NPPG as the viable use likely to cause the least harm to the significance of the heritage asset, not just through necessary initial changes, but also as a result of subsequent wear and tear and likely future changes.

Public benefits are also defined in the NPPG 2014, as anything that delivers economic, social and environmental progress as described in the Framework. Public benefits should flow from the proposed development, and they may include heritage benefits.

Department of Culture, Media and Sport Circular: Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings 2010

The Principles of Selection for listing buildings sets out the general criteria for assessing the special interest of a building in paras. 9 and 10, as below:

“Architectural Interest. To be of special architectural interest a building must be of importance in its architectural design, decoration or craftsmanship; special interest may also apply to nationally important examples of particular building types and techniques (e.g. buildings displaying technological innovation or virtuosity) and significant plan forms;

Historic Interest. To be of special historic interest a building must illustrate important aspects of the nation’s social, economic, cultural, or military history and/or have close historical associations with nationally important people. There should normally be some quality of interest in the physical fabric of the building itself to justify the statutory protection afforded by listing.

10. When making a listing decision, the Secretary of State may take into account the extent to which the exterior contributes to the architectural or historic interest of any group of buildings of which it forms part. This is generally known as group value. The Secretary of State will take this into account particularly where buildings comprise an important architectural or historic unity or a fine example of planning (e.g. squares, terraces or model villages) or where there is a historical functional relationship between a group of buildings. If a building is designated because of its group value, protection applies to the whole of the property, not just the exterior.”

In addition to the criteria and general principles set out in the guidance, a number of Selection Guides for different building types have been published by English Heritage in 2011. These Selection Guides provide further information regarding each building type, and demonstrate

what features are considered significant and likely to make a building of special architectural or historic interest when assessing each building type.

Historic England: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision Taking in the Historic Environment 2015

GPA Note 2 provides information to assist in implementing historic environment policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) and the related guidance given in the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). These include; assessing the significance of heritage assets, using appropriate expertise, historic environment records, recording and furthering understanding, neglect and unauthorised works, marketing and design and distinctiveness.

It provides a suggested staged approach to decision-making where there may be a potential impact on the historic environment:

- 1. Understand the significance of the affected assets;*
- 2. Understand the impact of the proposal on that significance;*
- 3. Avoid, minimise and mitigate impact in a way that meets the objectives of the Framework;*
- 4. Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance;*
- 5. Justify any harmful impacts in terms of the sustainable development objective of conserving significance and the need for change;*
- 6. Offset negative impacts on aspects of significance by enhancing others through recording, disseminating and archiving archaeological and historical interest of the important elements of the heritage assets affected.*

Historic England: Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets 2017

This document sets out guidance on managing change within the settings of heritage assets, including archaeological remains; historic buildings; historic sites, area and landscapes. It replaced *The Setting of Heritage Assets* 1st edition (Historic England, 2015), and *Seeing the History in the View* (English Heritage, 2011).

GPA Note 3 provides information to assist in implementing historic environment policy with regard to the managing change within the setting of heritage assets. This also provides a toolkit for assessing the implications of development proposals affecting setting. A series of stages are recommended for assessment, these are:

Step 1: identifying the heritage assets affected and their settings

Step 2: assessing whether, how and to what degree these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s)

Step 3: assessing the effect of the proposed development

Step 4: maximising enhancement and minimising harm

Step 5: making and documenting the decision and monitoring outcomes.

Historic England: Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management, 2016

This advice document sets out a series of conservation principles and guidance regarding the management of conservation areas. It outlines the fundamentals of designation, and, importantly, puts in place processes for character appraisals which may be used to manage development in the area moving forward. It sets an over-arching objective for character appraisals as documents which understand and articulate why the area is special and what elements within the area contribute to this special quality and which don't. Having done this, it outlines an approach to assessments of special interest which uses desk and field-based inquiry.

St Peters Conservation Area Appraisal (2009)

This document provides an overview of the historic development of the conservation area, an assessment of its character and appearance and then sets out general guidance on how development proposals can sustain this heritage significance.

Draft St Peters Conservation Area Appraisal (2018)

This draft document provides an overview of the historic development of the conservation area, an assessment of its character and appearance and then sets out general guidance on how development proposals can sustain this heritage significance. The draft document also proposes an extension to the current conservation boundaries.

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