

108 LONDON STREET, READING, BERKSHIRE

HERITAGE STATEMENT



JPHERITAGE

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CLIENT: Aspire 108 London Street Ltd

PREPARED BY: Jamie Preston, Heritage Consultant
JPHERITAGE
49 Dorset Crescent
Basingstoke
Hampshire

Mob: 07974 671840
Email: jamie.jpheritage@gmail.com

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108 LONDON STREET, READING - HERITAGE STATEMENT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared by JP Heritage on behalf of Aspire 108 London Street Ltd to inform and in support of a listed building consent application for proposed alterations at 108 London Street.
- 1.1.2 This document provides an outline description of the historic development and significance of the Grade II listed building and an assessment of impact of the proposed alterations. This has been undertaken to meet the requirements of the LPA in accordance with paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, March 2012). The report was produced using the guidance contained within the Historic England document entitled *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* (2008).

2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 NPPF

- 2.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out national planning policy relating to the conservation of the historic environment. It advises that in determining planning applications *'local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made to 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* (paragraph 128).
- 2.1.2 Annex 2 of the NPPF defines a Heritage Asset as being *'a building, monument, site, place area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions.'* Heritage assets are the valued components of the historic environment. They include designated heritage assets and non-designated heritage assets.
- 2.1.3 In determining planning applications, the NPPF advises that local planning authorities should take account of (paragraph 131):
- 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.
- 2.1.4 Specific guidance on the treatment of designated heritage assets (listed buildings) emphasises the need to understand the significance of a heritage asset in order to determine impacts on the historic environment (paragraph 132). It advises that *'when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage*

asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm should require clear and convincing justification’.

2.2 Draft Reading Borough Local Plan (2017)

2.2.1 The Reading Borough Local Plan was issued as a draft in May 2017. The relevant historic environment policy for the proposed development is as follows:

- Draft Policy EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

2.3 Reading Core Strategy (adopted January 2008 with alteration adopted 2015)

2.3.1 The relevant historic environment policy contained within the Reading Core Strategy is as follows:

- Policy CS33: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment.

Policy CS33 states that:

Historic features and areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings, will be protected and where appropriate enhanced. This will include: -

- *Listed Buildings;*
- *Conservation Areas;*
- *Other features with local or national designation, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and historic parks and gardens.*

Planning permission will only be granted where development has no adverse impact on historic assets and their settings. All proposals will be expected to protect and where appropriate enhance the character and appearance of the area in which they are located.

2.4 Reading Central Area Action Plan (adopted January 2009)

2.4.1 Policies contained within the Reading Central Area Action Plan relate to consideration of impacts on the settings of listed buildings and conservation areas. There is a Policy (RC4j) for 25-31 London Street but no specific policy for the southern end of London Street.

2.5 Reading Sites and Detailed Policies Document (adopted 2012)

2.5.1 This document refers to guidance set out in the NPPF (2012) and to Policy CS33 of the Reading Core Strategy but does not include additional policies relating to the historic environment.

3.0 UNDERSTANDING THE HERITAGE

3.1 Heritage Designations

3.1.1 108 London Street, Reading was added to the statutory *List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest* at Grade II on 22nd March 1957. The list description reads as follows:

Late C18. 3 storeys, brick on stucco plinth. Stone cills, flat cornice and parapet, stone coping. Old tile roof. Glazing bar sash windows, 3 on upper floors, doorcase to left: pilasters with shaped bracket caps and open moulded dentilled pediment. 6 panelled door and radiating fanlight. Contemporary lead rainwater hind.

3.1.2 108 London Street is located within the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area.

3.2 Historical background

3.2.1 London Street was developed from the medieval period onwards. John Speed's map of Reading (1611) shows '*London Strete*'. Although the street frontage today has a strong Georgian and later appearance, older structures can be found to the rear, including cellars lined with limestone 'quarried' from Reading Abbey, possibly in the 16th century. The side wall of Nos. 49-53 includes a timber frame with arch braces. No. 88 has a jettied first floor on Church Street.

3.2.2 By the late 18th century London Street had become one of the fashionable parts of town. Many of the elegant house from the 18th and 19th centuries which lined both sides of the road still survive. The earliest detailed map which shows the footprint of No. 108 London Street is the Reading Board of Health map (1853). This shows the double depth plan of the main part of the house and a narrower wing projecting from the southern side of the rear elevation.



Figure 1: Extract from the Reading Board of Health map (1853)

3.2.3 The 1st edition of the Ordnance Survey map of Reading (1879) provides details of the comparatively spacious garden to the rear. Otherwise there are no apparent changes to the building.

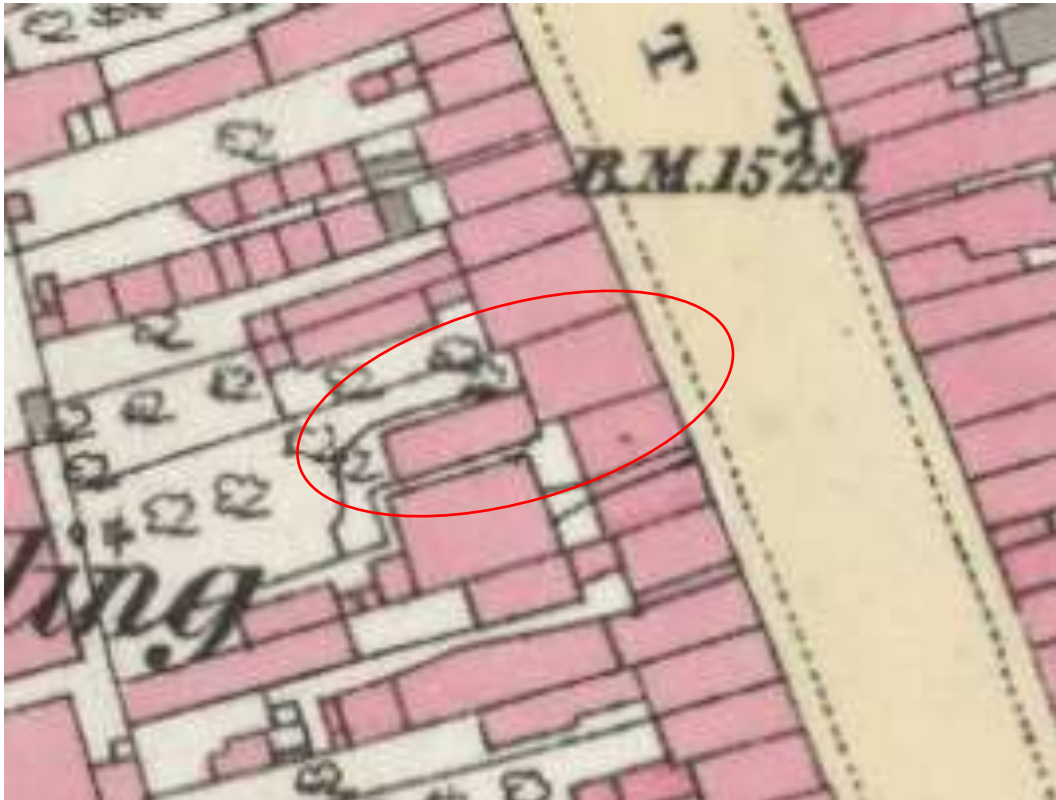


Figure 2: Extract from the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (1879)

- 3.2.4 The 1934 Ordnance Survey map, again, shows no changes to the footprint of the building. The 1957 edition of the 1:1250 map shows a conservatory on the rear elevation. Kelly's Directory suggests that 108 London Street had been converted to offices by 1960 and was occupied by Block and Anderson Ltd who supplied office equipment. By the late 1960s the rear wing of the house appears to have been partly demolished and replaced by a freestanding structure. Kelly's Directory of 1976 records that 108 London Street was occupied by W. E. Chivers and Sons Ltd, building contractors.

4.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE LISTED BUILDING

4.1 East elevation

- 4.1.1 The east, or front, elevation is of brick construction in Flemish bond with a stucco plinth. The appearance of the parapet and flat arch brick heads of the windows on the second floor suggests that this may have been rebuilt. Curiously, the eaves of the hipped roof on the right hand side project beyond the line of the parapet. This includes a box fascia which hints at alterations to the roof. A fragment of the upper part of the north elevation is visible to the right and this has a tile hanging finish.
- 4.1.2 The window openings are typical of the later 18th century with flat arch brick heads and 6 over six sash windows with slender glazing bars. The sash windows on the third floor include horns which indicate a c. 1850 or later date. The relative proportions of the window openings reflect the status of each floor. Of note are the taller, more slender appearance of the windows on the first floor, demonstrating the *piano nobile* or principal floor of the house. The front entrance is to the left and this includes a fanlight with semi-circular opening which suggests a later 18th century date.



Figure 3: Front elevation of 108 London Street

4.2 West elevation

- 4.2.1 The west elevation is the rear elevation of the house. The ground floor is masked by modern additions, but the first and second floors provide details of brick construction in English bond. This is a highly unusual form of brick bonding for the period 1700-1799 and would generally indicate a 17th century or earlier date or brickwork dating from the Victorian era. It is not clear if the rear elevation has been rebuilt. The style of window openings are not consistent stylistically with those on the front elevation (see below).
- 4.2.2 The window openings on the second floor include closer bricks and are thought to be original. The exposed sash boxes are very chunky in appearance and is an anachronistic detail for an 18th century house. The large opening with a pair of sash windows to the left is a 20th century insertion.



Figure 4: Rear elevation of 108 London Street

4.3 Ground floor

Entrance hall – G1

- 4.3.1 The entrance hall with staircase to the left and hall leading to ground floor rooms to the right is a classic 18th century floor plan for town houses. There is a short lobby with elliptical fanlight and 20th century doors. The open well staircase is also a 20th century replacement, probably inserted in the 1930s. The mouldings and height of the skirting in the front part of the entrance hall suggests a later 19th century date. The lower skirting to the rear of the entrance hall has similar mouldings but appear to be associated with the remodelling of the staircase in the 20th century.



Figure 5: Staircase in G1



Figure 6: Lobby with 20th century internal door and fanlight in G1

Front room – G2

- 4.3.2 Room G2 is entered through a six-panel door from G1. This includes brass door furniture, including a Union mortice lock which demonstrate a later 20th century date for the door. There are two ‘cupboard’ doors either side of the chimney breast in G2 which are also considered to be of 20th century date.
- 4.3.3 The focus of G2 is the fireplace which is located centrally along the wall between G2 and G3. The fireplace is embellished with fire surround which includes variants of anthemion on cyma recta, dentils, leaf and dart ornamentation and bead variations. The form and detailing is typical of later 18th century design. However, the surround appears to be missing a frieze below the mantelshelf and suggests that it has either been modified or imported from another building. It is, therefore, not clear if the fire surround forms part of the original design of the interior. It is clear that it has been re-set as the backing is partly of plasterboard.
- 4.3.4 Other details which demonstrate substantial intervention to the fireplace are the missing hearth and the refurbished cast iron hob register grate. The area between the grate and the position of the hearth is plated over, as is the register above. Both the missing hearth and the non-function grate demonstrates that the fireplace in G2 modified for show rather than to provide a source of heating, probably in the 20th century.



Figure 7: Modified late 18th century fire surround with refurbished 19th century register grate in G2

- 4.3.5 G2 is decorated in a late 18th to 19th century manner with dado rail, picture rail and cornice. The simple form of the cornice suggests an early 19th century date rather than 18th century. The dado rail, however, appears to be later, possibly 20th century, while the form of the skirting is characteristic of later 19th and 20th century designs. This style of panelling, i.e, sunk panels with inner mouldings, in the window recesses and the simple torus skirting are consistent with 19th century forms. The floorboards are 20th century.
- 4.3.6 In summary, Room G2 appears to contain some earlier features, e.g. skirting boards, panels in the window recesses and possibly the cornice, but the rest of the interior appears to have been remodelled in the 20th century, using recycled and replacement fixtures and fittings, the former either re-used from within the house or imported from another building.



Figure 8: Panelled window recesses with low skirting in G2

Rear room – G3

- 4.3.7 The fireplace surround in G3 is green marble. The simple form and employment of ornate brackets supporting a marble mantelshelf is typical of Victorian designs and remained popular into the 20th century. Evidence of the fabric demonstrates that this surround is set into a plasterboard finish. The back edge of the mantelshelf is roughly cut which suggests that it has been imported from another building. The cast iron register grate with side hobs is also consistent with Victorian design. Similar to G2, the hearth has been removed and the cast iron grate has been refurbished with a fixed register and the area below the grate plated over. These details demonstrate that the cast iron grate was inserted for show rather than to function as a coal grate.



Figure 9: Re-set Victorian fireplace surround and refurbished register grate

- 4.3.8 Similar to G2, the walls of this room are articulated by a late 19th to early 20th century style skirting, a picture rail and cornice. The cornice is characterised by reeding which terminates in a roundel in each corner of the room. This type of ornamentation was popular in the Regency period and continued in use in to the early years of Victoria's reign.



Figure 10: Plaster cornice with reeding and roundel ornamentation

- 4.3.9 The six panel cupboard door on the left hand side of the chimney breast includes brass door furniture with a Union mortice lock and door knobs but no escutcheons and is of later 20th century date. The mouldings of the architrave are consistent with the design of other door architraves associated with the 20th century alterations to the house, including the large opening along the rear wall of G3. By contrast, the door on the right includes a brass rim lock and the door architrave is reminiscent of 19th and early 20th century designs. There is evidence for a torus type skirting board within this cupboard. This contrasts with the much higher skirting in G3 which appears to be a later insertion, probably of later 19th or early 20th century date.



Figure 11: Six panel cupboard door in G3

- 4.3.10 There is a large opening in the rear wall of G3. This was probably created between 1934 and 1957 when a conservatory was added to the rear of the building.
- 4.3.11 In summary, there are a small number of features that appear to relate to the early history of the listed building, in particular the plaster cornice with reeded and roundel decoration. The cupboard door, architrave and skirting within the cupboard appears to be of c. 19th to 20th century date but all of the other doors, skirting and picture rail are later 19th or of 20th century date, the doors are later 20th century.

Kitchenette – G4

- 4.3.12 Room G4 is a modern space that is considered to be of no interest.

4.4 First floor

Front room – F1

- 4.4.1 The door architraves between the landing (F3) and F1 and F2 include schemes of mouldings that are consistent with others identified as of 20th century date within the building. The mouldings on each side of the door between F1 and F3 are different which suggests a composite architrave created from two sources. The doors to F1 from the landing (F3) and between F1 and F2 are of the two-panel type and are both 20th century replacements.



Figure 12: Architrave of door opening between the landing (F3) and F1

- 4.4.2 F1 is characterised by large large-panel panelling. The panelling design includes a scheme of one large upper panel over each lower panel, a dado rail, a moulded plaster cornice and a plain skirting board. The panels include an ovolo moulding and fielded panels, a simple design which is characteristic of later panelling. The cornice includes a central square projection with a small drip projecting from the bottom which is reminiscent of late 17th and early 18th century cornices. The dado has a profile similar to bolelection mouldings which is also characteristic of late 17th and early 18th century forms.
- 4.4.3 Although the panelling is reminiscent of c. mid-18th century designs, there are a number of anomalies which are discussed in more detail in the assessment of impacts section below.

Firstly, the panelling blocks the central sash window opening on the front elevation. Also, some of the construction details appear incongruous. For example, the proportions of the top rail appears cramped in relation to the very heavy cornice. The execution of the cornice is poor, with the detailing at the angles appearing disjointed. The bullnose skirting is another odd detail. The replacement floorboards appear to run beneath the panelling. As noted above, the two door architraves are of different design and they do not therefore form part of a coherent design. Also, the panels in the window recesses are characterised by sunk panels rather than fielded panels which further suggests the panelling is a later, probably 20th century, insertion.



Figure 13: Full-height panelling and corner fireplace in F1

- 4.4.3 The fireplace surround in F1 is very simply detailed and of 18th century style but modified. The mantelshelf is moulded and has been applied over the wall panelling. It appears that a frieze is missing which has impacted on the overall composition. The cast iron hob register grate is of c. mid-19th century design but has been modified and includes a fixed register and a missing fire bar and grate. The hearth has been removed and floor boards inserted. It is clear that the cast iron grate was inserted for decorative purposes rather than as a functioning fireplace. The tongue and groove floorboards in this room are 120mm wide and are considered to date from the 20th century.



Figure 14: 20th century floorboards running under the refurbished coal grate in F1

Front room – F2

- 4.4.2 F2 contains a chimneybreast with simple fire surround comprising a frame of mouldings with frieze and mantelshelf with dentils and cyma recta mouldings. These details are consistent with a late 18th to early 19th century date. The fireplace has been partly infilled and a c. mid-19th century register grate with side hobs inserted. Similar to all of the other cast iron gates, this example has been refurbished and plates inserted to replace the register and the space between the gate and hearth. Again, the hearthstone has been removed and 20th century floorboards run beneath the grate, demonstrating a decorative rather than functional purpose. The fire surround is fixed against a plasterboard backing so has clearly been re-set.



Figure 15: Fireplace in F2

- 4.4.3 This is quite a plain room with dado rail and picture rail, but no coving or cornice. Below the dado rail is textured wallpaper. This type of wall treatment was in vogue in the later 19th and early 20th centuries. However, the evidence from a wall light fitting suggests that the upper

part of this wall, at least, is finished with modern plasterboard. The dado has a similar moulding profile to the example in G1 but appears to have been modified.



Figure 16: Decorative scheme in F2

- 4.4.4 The two panel cupboard door appears to date from the later 19th or early 20th centuries. The door leading from the landing is a 20th century replacement/insertion.



Figure 17: Late 19th or early 20th century cupboard door in F2

Landing – F3

- 4.4.5 The layout of the landing area provides access to two rooms at the front of the house (F1 and F2) and on to the rear (F4). The staircase was remodelled in the 20th century. There is a wide

segmental arch on the rear side of the landing which also appears to be a 20th century alteration.



Figure 18: Staircase in F3

Rear room – F4

- 4.4.4 This is a small square room accessed from the landing. It is simply decorated with a low skirting with torus moulding and picture rail. The door between F4 and F5 appears to be of similar age to those in G3 and F1/F2, i.e. late 19th or early 20th century but probably recycled rather than in-situ.

Rear room – F5

- 4.4.5 The fireplace in F5 has plain jambs and roundels and is characteristic of designs dating from c. 1800-1840. However, the details, particularly the frieze don't appear to align correctly, and this suggests modification. Indeed, as with all of the other fireplaces, the hearth has been removed and replaced with floorboards and the chimney piece as a whole is fitted against a plasterboard backing. Also the cast iron surround does not include a grate or a register. Other internal features of this room include a dado rail and low torus skirting.



Figure 19: Early 19th century style fire surround with roundels and refurbished cast iron grate in F5

4.5 Second floor

Front room – S1

- 4.5.1 There is a chimney breast with fireplace along the south wall of S1. The simple detailing of the surround reflects its position and is consistent with later 18th and early 19th century design. The mantelpiece includes cyma recta mouldings which are also employed in the fireplace surround in G2. Like all of the other fireplaces in the house, the original size of the fireplace has been reduced. With the exception of simple bullnose skirting, there are no other internal decorative features.



Figure 20: Georgian fire surround in S1

Front room – S2

- 4.5.2 S2 is accessed from the landing (S3) through a later 20th century two-panelled door. Although the architrave mouldings are reminiscent of 18th and 19th century examples, they are similar to examples in Rivington's Building Construction published in 1904 (p. 130) and could, of course, be later than this. The cupboard door on the right hand side of the chimney breast is also a two-panel design and, perhaps dates from the later 19th to early 20th centuries. No other features of interest were observed.



Figure 21: Chimney breast with cupboard door to the right in S2

Landing – S3

- 4.5.3 The landing area appears to have been remodelled, possibly when the staircase was updated. This appears to have involved the insertion of an L-plan partition which extended into S5. The partition abuts part of the door frame to S2 and appears incongruous.



Figure 22: Staircase in S3

Rear room – S4

- 4.5.4 The door between S4 and S5 appears to be of similar age to the other two panel doors of similar thickness, i.e. later 19th or early 20th century.



Figure 23: Late 19th to early 20th century two panelled door between S4 and S5

Rear room – S5

- 4.5.5 A two panel cupboard door on the left hand side of the chimney stack is similar to other cupboard doors and narrow thickness doors and is probably of later 19th to early 20th century date. No other features of interest were noted.



Figure 24: Late 19th century two panelled cupboard door in S5

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

5.1 Floor plan

- 5.1.1 The ground plan of 108 London Street is of a form which had become standard by c. 1720 for terraced houses, i.e. staircase to one side and a room at the front and a room at the back. A possible arrangement for rooms on the ground floor, and one which was popular for terraced houses from the early to mid-18th century, was a dining room at the front and a study/library to the rear. The front elevation of 108 London Street, with its apparently taller windows to the first floor, clearly demonstrates that the first floor was designed as the principal floor for entertaining. The front rooms of these floors were generally reception rooms or dining rooms, while the room to the rear served as drawing rooms. Another facet of the classic Georgian floor plan is apparent in the form of a third smaller room on the first and second floors. In the case of 108 London Street, these smaller rooms are accessed from the back room (i.e. F5 and S5) and appear to conform to the closets which characterise floor plans of terraced houses in the Georgian period.
- 5.1.2 There are, however, a few anomalies. Firstly, the orientation of the partitions on the first and second floors is different to the alignment of the ground floor partitions. This strongly suggests later alterations to the floor plan. Secondly, the principal room at the front on the first floor is divided into two spaces. This results in rather cramped proportions which is out of character for 18th and early 19th century floor plans. The proportions of the first floor windows on the front elevation clearly demonstrate that the first floor was designed as the principal floor. Generally you would expect to find a large room at the front of the house for entertaining. By

the later 18th century this would have been a drawing room and would have been comparatively light and airy. The heavy panelling in F1 is reminiscent of the decoration of dining rooms rather than principal reception rooms. By the later 18th century dining rooms were more likely to be on the ground floor, where they were closer to kitchens housed in a basement. The layout and decoration of the principal rooms on the first floor at 108 London Street does, therefore, appear to be at odds with contemporary trends in domestic architecture.

- 5.1.3 The basement would have originally been used as a kitchen and for servants. This area has been much altered with modern surfaces and heating equipment. The brick steps to the basement are of interest but nothing else of note was observed.
- 5.1.4 The roof structure was completely replaced and the chimney stack rebuilt within the loft space in the 20th century. Nothing of interest was observed within the loft space.
- 5.1.3 The ground floor is considered to be relatively intact in terms of original floor plan and includes a main front and rear room served by a chimney stack and an entrance hall. The ground floor plan makes an important contribution to the significance of the listed building. The chimney stack contributes to our understanding of the floor plan on the first and second floors but the original staircase and room layouts have been substantially altered. The existing floor plans of the first and second floors are considered to be of low significance.

5.2 Internal wall finishes

- 5.2.1 Internal decoration associated with the early history of the house is fairly minimal. This includes a reeded plaster cornice with roundels in G3, perhaps the cornice in G2, and the panelling around the window recesses on the ground and first floors. All other details appear to date from the later 19th and 20th centuries.
- 5.2.2 Much of the interior is finished with plaster. The evidence from apertures for light fittings and other features demonstrates that a large proportion of the walls are finished with plasterboard. By contrast, there is full height panelling in F1. The panelling in F1 appears to be of some age and has been constructed in a traditional manner using peg joints. This internal finish is characteristic of interiors dating from the second quarter of the 18th century rather than the later 18th century. Full-height panelling began to go out of fashion as early as c. 1720 but examples can be found as late as the 1760s (Hall, p. 142).
- 5.1.4 English Heritage (now Historic England) guidance on Georgian joinery provides some details of the construction of panelling. It appears that it was generally applied to masonry walls, either brick or stone. Sometimes it was placed right up against the masonry without any appreciable cavity behind it. In these cases, nails were driven through the styles into wooden blocks or lengths set into the masonry. Where there are larger cavities between the panelling and wall, there might be wooden uprights behind the panelling to which the styles are nailed. It appears that the panelling in F1 is applied to a stud wall which is not consistent with the norm, i.e. fixed to masonry walls. This structural detail and the points made above regarding appearance and room layout, suggests that the panelling in F1 may have been recycled, either from another part of the house, or from another building. Panelling is ultimately portable and were often re-used in this way.
- 5.1.5 The other anomaly is the corner fireplace in F1. Corner fireplaces grew in popularity from c. 1700 onwards. The chimney stack can be traced on the second floor where there is a shallow

chimney breast in S1. At ground floor level, however, there is no evidence for a chimney breast. Following the line of the stack in F1 and S1, it is apparent that a chimney breast on the ground floor would be in the entrance hall. This is a highly unusual position for a fireplace in a domestic building. Inspection of the roof void provided no evidence for a chimney stack on this side of the house. The roof structure has been completely rebuilt and the position of the chimney stack is concealed beneath boarding. The chimney stack on the northern side of the building has been rebuilt from second floor ceiling level upwards.

5.3 Internal features

- 5.3.1 On first impressions it appears that the more important features of the interior are the fireplace surrounds on the ground and first floors. However, on closer inspection it is apparent that these fire surrounds have been fitted against a stud and plasterboard wall finish rather than solid masonry. Although the fireplace surrounds in G1, F2 and F5 are of late 18th and early 19th century date, it is clear that they have been modified and positioned against a modern wall surface. It is unclear whether any of these fireplaces are original to the house. Indeed, they may have been imported from other buildings. All of the cast iron coal grates appear to be of mid to late 19th century date but have been refurbished with registers plated over or sealed shut. This and the absence of hearths demonstrate that the fireplaces have been altered to function as decorative pieces rather than functioning fireplaces.

6.0 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

6.1 Ground floor alterations

- 6.1.1 Proposed alterations to the ground floor are as follows:
- Blocking of a door between G1 and G2;
 - Removal and reinstatement of fire surrounds in G2 and G3;
 - Removal of a section of wall on the western side of G3;
 - The removal of a partition in G4 and the insertion of a new partition creating a larger room accessed from G3.
- 6.1.2 The door to G2 from the entrance hall (G1) is 20th century as demonstrated by the door knobs and mortise lock. This door is therefore associated with later 20th century alterations to the building and considered to be of low significance. The position of the door opening does, however, reflect the original layout of the building. The impact of this change will be mitigated by either retaining the door architrave or replacing it with an appropriate design so that the door position is preserved from within the entrance hall (G1).



Figure 25: 20th century six panelled door from the entrance hall (G1) to G2

- 6.1.3 The fire surrounds in G2 and G3 have been modified and possibly imported from another building (G3). The cast iron grates are of mid to late 19th century but have been refurbished as non-functioning features and appear to be associated with 20th century alterations to the building. The area above the fireplaces has a plasterboard finish which requires investigation. The removal and reinstatement of the fireplaces and cast iron grates would not have harmful impacts on the significance of the listed building. Indeed, investigation of the chimney breast will contribute to an understanding of the 20th century alterations to the listed building.



Figure 26: Chipboard hearth in G2

- 6.1.4 It is proposed to widen the existing large opening on the western side of G3. This opening is thought to be associated with the construction of a conservatory on the rear elevation of the

building in the 1930s-50s. The opening and associated architrave is therefore considered to be of low significance. The widening of the opening would require the removal of a small area of historic fabric. The alignment of the wall would be preserved by retaining a nib. The early 19th century cornice would not be impacted by this element of the proposals.



Figure 27: 20th century opening to a former conservatory on the rear wall of G3

- 6.1.5 It is proposed to reconfigure the western end of the entrance hall (G1) and G4 to create a bathroom. This would require the removal of a partition between G1 and G4. This partition appears to be a modern insertion. The door frame at the entrance to G4 is modern and the skirting boards associated with this wall do not match those in the main part of the entrance hall (G1). A 20th century part glazed door at the western end of the entrance hall (G1) would also be removed. None of these alterations would impact on historic fabric.



Figure 28: Modern door frame to G4



Figure 29: 20th century internal rear door in G1

- 6.1.6 To create a new bathroom a partition would be inserted at the western end of the entrance hall (G1). The alignment of the new partition would more or less follow the pattern of the room layouts on the first and second floors and is therefore considered to be sympathetic to

the historic floor plan. Some fabric, including later 19th to early 20th century skirting boards, in G3 would be removed to create a door opening into the proposed bathroom. This would have only minimal impacts on historic fabric and would not result in a blurring of the historic floor plan of the building.

- 6.1.7 An opening with a segmental arch head in the original rear wall would be filled-in. This may have been the original access from the main house to the extension to the rear. The infilling of this opening would not impact historic fabric. The change will be mitigated by leaving offsets so that the form of the door opening remains legible.



Figure 30: Door opening with segmental arch head at the rear of the entrance hall (G1)

6.2 First floor alterations

6.2.1 Proposed alterations to the first floor are as follows:

- Infilling of the door from the landing (F3) to F1;
- The removal of the panelled partition between F2 and F3;
- Insertion of partitions to create a bathroom in F1/F2;
- Creation of a new opening on the right hand side of the chimney breast in F5;
- Infilling of the door from the landing (F3) to F4;
- Partial removal of the partition between F4 and F5.

6.2.2 The two-panel door from the landing to F1 includes the same brass door furniture as the majority of the doors at 108 London Street and is of later 20th century date. The pattern of mouldings for the architrave is not consistent on both sides of the frame which suggests a composite door surround. The blocking of this door opening would not impact on historic fabric. Changes to the layout of the first floor in the 20th century have compromised the

legibility of the original floor plan of the building. It is therefore considered that the infilling of this opening would not have harmful impacts on the significance of the listed building.



Figure 31: 20th century door from the landing (F3) to F1

- 6.2.3 Removing the partition between F1 and F2 represents a substantial change to the floor plan of the building as it exists today. However, there are a number of details that demonstrate that the wall panelling was a later alteration. Firstly, the panelled partition between F1 and F2 blocks the central window on the first floor. Also, the presence of a partition in this location appears to be at odds with the kind of large reception room for entertaining that you would expect for a building of this period. The use of full-height panelling as a form of decoration, generally associated with dining rooms or parlours in the first half of the 18th century, appears anachronistic for a building of later 18th century date.



Figure 32: Blocked sash window to the right in F1

- 6.2.4 Constructional details provide further evidence relating to the integrity of the panelling. Firstly, the structure of the partition, i.e. a stud wall, is not consistent with the practice of applying panelling to masonry walls. The panels themselves would have originally been formed of planks glued together. There is no clear evidence for this. The frame of the panelling appears to be constructed in a traditional manner using dowels. This may suggest that the frames of the panelling were imported from another building but the use of dowels would not be inconsistent with construction techniques in the first half of the 20th century. The evidence of the fabric and the layout of the room, particularly the blocked window, strongly suggests that the panelling was either imported from another building and reconstructed in Room F1 or fabricated and inserted into F1, probably in the 20th century.
- 6.2.5 The evidence of the wall finish in F2 also strongly suggests that the partition between F1 and F2 is a 20th century alteration. Removal of a modern light fitting shows that the upper part of the partition (above the dado rail) has a plasterboard and skim finish. This is clearly modern. It is not clear if this extends to the area below the dado rail. However, the use of textured paper is very much a c. 1930s finish so the finish of the partition is of 20th century date at the earliest.
- 6.2.6 The removal of the partition between F1 and F2 would not therefore impact on significant historic fabric. The proposed layout for these rooms would further sub-divide this space to create a bathroom. However, the change would have the benefit of opening up the central sash window so that it can be appreciated as part of the internal character of the first floor.
- 6.2.7 The creation of a door opening on the right hand side of the chimney breast in F5 would require a small breach through a partition. Apart from the Regency style fire surround and cast iron grate, this room is characterised by torus skirting and a plain picture rail. Torus skirting has a long date range so is not particularly diagnostic but the lack of dado or cornice in combination with a picture rail and skirting suggests a 20th century date. Indeed, the large window opening appears to be contemporary with the large opening in the west wall of G3, i.e. 1930s -1950s. Also, as noted elsewhere, the wall alignments do not match those of the original configuration on the ground floor. Based on this evidence it is concluded that the proposed opening would not impact on significant historic fabric.



Figure 33: Breach to be created in the wall to the right of the chimney breast in F5

- 6.2.8 The two-panel door from the landing to F4 includes the same brass door furniture as the majority of the doors at 108 London Street and is of 20th century date. The architrave mouldings also match the pattern of 20th century doors observed elsewhere in the building. This door is also set within what appears to be an infill of a perhaps earlier 20th century segmental arched opening. The infilling of this door would neither impact on historic fabric or on the historic plan form of the building.



Figure 34: 20th century door and stud and plaster infill at F4



Figure 35: 20th century six panelled door in the partition between F4 and F5

- 6.2.9 It is proposed to remove the partition between F4 and F5 to create an open kitchen/lounge area. Although there is little evidence to suggest that this is an original partition, the door and architrave are of 20th century date and the torus skirting is evident in areas which have been identified as part of 20th century alterations, it is likely that it reflects the original layout of the

first floor. The potential harm to the historic floor plan has been mitigated by leaving a nib on one side. This will contribute to preserving an understanding of the original floor plan of the building.



Figure 36: Hearth replaced by floorboards in F5

6.2.9 All of the fireplaces have been subject to alteration. This appears to be associated with the insertion of replacement floor boards that extend below the hearths. The fireplace in F1 includes a refurbished cast iron register hob (19th century), and a modified surround of later 18th century style and no hearth. The fireplace in F2 includes a relatively complete later 18th century fire surround, refurbished cast iron grate (the register has been removed and plated over) and no hearth. The fireplace in F5 includes a refurbished cast iron surround with no grate and no hearth. The wooden surround is early 19th century style but the construction appears odd and may be of 20th century date. The removal and reinstatement of the fireplaces and cast iron grates would not have harmful impacts on the significance of the listed building. Indeed, investigation of the chimney breast will contribute to an understanding of the 20th century alterations to the listed building.

6.3 Second floor alterations

6.3.1 Proposed alterations to the second floor are as follows:

- Removal of a partition wall between S1 and S2;
- Creation of partitions to create a bathroom in S1/S2;
- Blocking up a doorway between S3 and S4;
- Partial removal of a partition between S4 and S5.

6.3.2 Similar to the partition between F1 and F2 on the first floor, the partition between S1 and S2 has blocked the central window on the second floor. There are no features of merit. The bullnose skirting is characteristic of modern interior joinery. Historically, lower status rooms such as basements and attics were fitted with simple square edged boards. The position of the wall concealing the central sash clearly shows that it is a later, in this case 20th century, alteration and its removal would not negatively affect the significance of the listed building.



Figure 37: Blocked sash window opening to the left in S1

- 6.3.3 The proposed layout for these rooms would further sub-divide this space to create a bathroom. However, the change would have the benefit of opening up the central sash window so that it can be appreciated as part of the internal character of the first floor.
- 6.3.4 The blocking of a doorway between S3 and S4 would impact on a 20th century two panel door. The asbestos survey report shows that the partition between S3 and S4 is finished with plasterboard which further demonstrates recent changes in this area. There would be no impacts on important historic fabric.



Figure 38: Two panelled door to S4 from the landing (S3)

- 6.3.5 It is proposed to remove the partition between S4 and S5 to create an open kitchen/lounge area. There is little evidence to suggest that this is an original partition. The door has a brass rim lock similar to the door in the partition between F1 and F2 and the architrave is consistent with 20th century designs. The bullnose skirting is evident in areas which have been

identified as part of 20th century alterations, i.e. the partition between S1 and S2. However, it is likely that the partition reflects the original layout of the second floor. The potential harm to the historic floor plan has been mitigated by leaving a nib on one side. This will contribute to preserving an understanding of the original floor plan of the building.



Figure 39: Early 20th century door in partition between S4 and S5

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The proposed conversion of 108 London Street from offices to apartments involves some alterations to the internal layout. There has clearly been substantial changes made to the building during the 20th century which has impacted on the internal layout and integrity of the original building. This includes a replacement staircase, reconfiguration of the first and second floor rooms, the refurbishment and remodelling of fireplaces, replacement of the roof structure and the substantial works to the basement. Internal doors throughout have been replaced. The floorboards on the ground and first floors have also been replaced. The original form and character of the listed building has therefore been much diminished.
- 7.2 The proposed alterations would have only limited impacts on significant historic fabric and this relates to small openings in G3. Otherwise, the proposed alterations impact on 20th century fabric which is considered to be of low significance. Changes to internal circulation impact on later doors and this impact will be mitigated by retaining existing architraves or replacing them on a like for like basis. The main change in terms of existing character would be the removal of a partition between F1 and F2. This report concludes that the full-height panelling in F1 was inserted in the 20th century and may have been recycled from another building. It is also considered that this panelling has had negative impacts on the original layout of the building, particularly as it blocks one of the sash windows on the front elevation. The fireplace surrounds are of some interest but it is unclear if they formed part of the original building and have been re-set or imported from other buildings. These fireplaces will be retained as part of the proposed conversion.

- 7.4 There are no proposed changes to the street elevation of the listed building and therefore there will be no impacts on the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. There are modest changes proposed to the glazing on the rear elevation and these are considered to have a neutral impact.
- 7.3 The proposed conversion provides a future use for the building which has been redundant for some time and will ensure the long term preservation of the listed building. It is considered that the proposed development would not have an adverse impact on the overall significance of the listed building in accordance with paragraph 132 of the NPPF and the Reading Borough Local Plan Policy EN1.

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Figure 40: Ground, first and second floor phase plans and room key