

15 CASTLE STREET

HERITAGE STATEMENT

Date: JUNE 2024
Ref: 1025
15 CASTLE STREET
READING RG1 7ST



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and designers with an agenda.
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01 PRELIMINARIES

PURPOSE

This statement has been prepared in support of a live application for listed building consent seeking minor internal alterations at 15 Castle Street, Reading.

A statement of significance is required because the target building is listed Grade II*.

METHODOLOGY

This statement has been prepared following detailed discussions with the applicant and our own site attendance. Sources of historic information have been consulted to ensure our views and assessments are appropriate.

As the proposals are minor in nature we have made efforts to keep this document brief - that is, proportionate to the work being undertaken.



STREET FRONTAGE OF 15 CASTLE STREET

02 PARTICULARS

LOCATION

15 CASTLE STREET, READING RG17SB

LBC APPLICATION REFERENCE

240061

DESIGNATION

Listed Grade II*

Within St Mary’s Butts & Castle Street Conservation Area

LIST ENTRY

1303734 (22-Mar-1957)

LISTING DESCRIPTION

C16. 3 storeys, jettied, and cellar. Ground floor painted brick, upper floors timber-framed with moulded wood jetties. 2 gables, old tile roof. On the ground floor an C18 6 panel door to right with panelled soffit. Rectangular overlight with diamond pattern glazing; to left 2 glazing bar sash windows, C18 with contemporary shutters. 2 small angular bays with glazing bar sashes on 1st floor. A smaller window in each gable (Yorkshire Sashes). Irregular extensions to rear, timber- framed and brick with old tile roofs.

PLANNING HISTORY

Pre-application advice was sought in June 2023 under reference 234603. While the application included other aspects of work, the response did comment favourably on the work outlined in this current applciation. Informal discussions were also held with Historic England and Reading Planning Department before this current application was submitted.

NATURE OF THE PROPOSAL

The application seeks to install a new internal wall and doors to the ground floor front room as part of a series of alterations seeking to reinstate the former grandeur of this historic building. This proposal is made in order to create an entrance space which would improve the usability of the space.

The applicant has informally discussed their intentions with Historic England and following their advice is confident there is no harm to the building.

The alterations proposed are minor and can be made with high reversibility. There is no removal of historic fabric and new materials added in are sympathetic to the existing materials.

03 HERITAGE CONTEXT

READING & CASTLE STREET

1000 years ago Reading was a thriving urban community, due in part to its proximity to the Kennet river crossings, and the point at which important north-south, and east-west trade routes met.

These trade routes connected at a crossroads between Castle Street and Bridge Street, connecting Oxford to the north (via Caversham Bridge), London to the East, Southampton to the south, and Bath to the West until modern re-planning of the town and the construction of the IDR.

The significance of this location can be seen in the construction of St Mary’s Minster, which has been the site of a church since C6 or early C7. Castle Street therefore forms an important part of the Anglo-Saxon (pre-1066) community that would become modern Reading.

Evidence of this historic significance can be read in the urban planning, and in the historic fabric that remains.

CASTLE STREET IN C16

By C16 Reading had become a large centre, fuelled by the wool trade and the Abbey attracting pilgrims and associated economic growth. Castle Street was still an important part of the town, and the construction in C16 of the architecturally impressive 15 & 17 Castle Street are evidence of the high status of the area.

15 CASTLE STREET

15 Castle Street (the subject of this application) has a double-fronted Tudor facade, with dual gables and projecting bay windows. The floors are jettied to the front, which, alongside the deep narrow plot, shows that land in this area was of high value.

The 16C street facing facade of the application building is noted in the St Marys Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal as holding significance by being one of the “C16 survivors” and therefore contributing positively to the character of area.

The rear of the building has been extended in the 1960s in a visually matching but historically unsympathetic fashion with non-breathable materials and modern techniques. While it is the applicant’s intention to improve this with subsequent applications, the current application does not concern that part of the building.

As the external appearance of the heritage asset will not be affected by these proposals, no further reference needs to be made to its setting.



LOCATION OF 15 CASTLE STREET



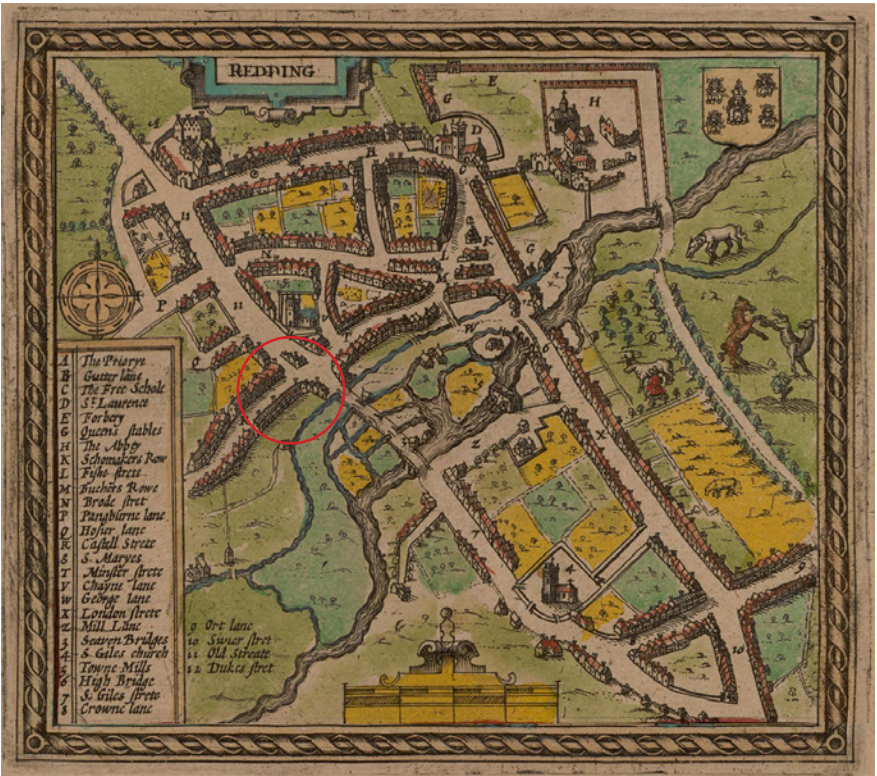
VIEW OF CASTLE STREET WITH NO 15 CENTRAL TO THE IMAGE

04 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

MAP REGRESSION

While this application does not seek to make external changes to the property, it is useful to see the development of the local area to understand its history and trace the origins of certain aspects. This can inform our understanding of where the significance lies and guide the proposals to support it.

A range of maps are available for Reading town centre from the earliest at 1611 to current Ordnance Survey mapping. Each map shows the location of the target building in red.



1611 (JOHN SPEED)

The earliest known map of Reading showing Castle Street as one of the principle roads in the town.



1830 (ORDNANCE SURVEY 1:63300)

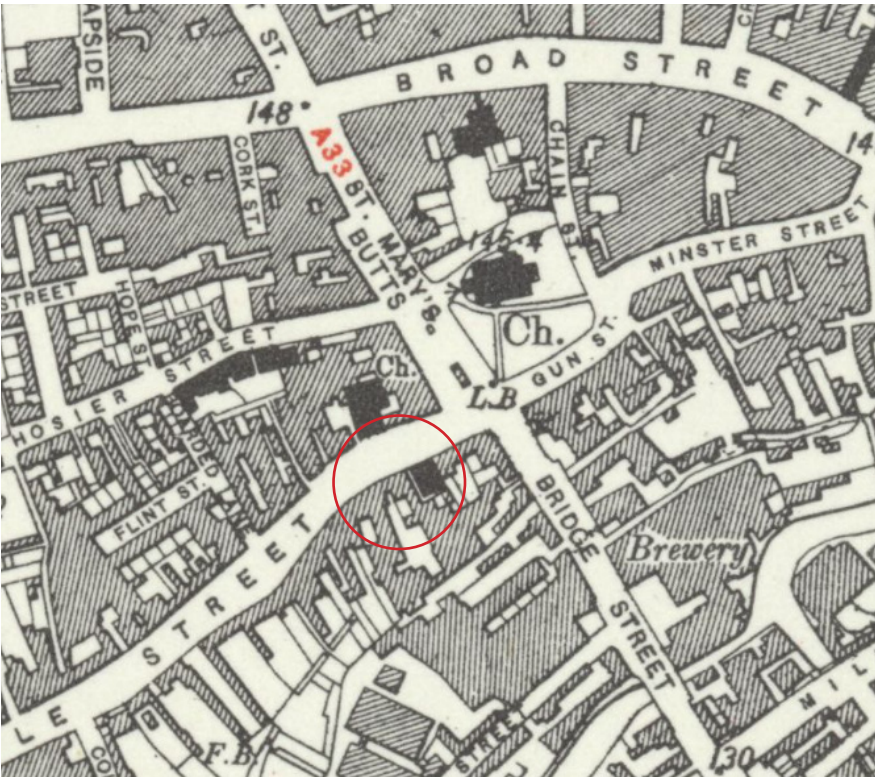
Note minimal change to Castle Street since 1611.



1883 (OS 6-INCH SHEET XXXVII)

Note the extensive development to the rear of adjacent properties.

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1938 (OS 6-INCH SHEET XXXVII)

Showing minor change in development at Castle Street.



SITE LOCATION (CURRENT)

Note the surviving street frontage and modern development to the rear.

05 HISTORIC FABRIC

INTERIOR

The principle range fronting onto Castle Street is C16 and extends over 3 floors with a partial cellar beneath. The timber frame can be seen in places and modern subdivisions have been made in the upper floors. Original wall plaster survives in some locations. Modern wall finishes replace or cover historic fabric in other locations.

Behind the C16 range are several 1960s office rooms and the staircases rising to the top floor. These broadly form an L-shape to the overall floorplan. Internally it can be seen that substantial alterations have been made to the fabric and to the visible finishes of the building throughout.

The building use has also been altered over the years, most recently into offices with 1980s modern services etc that have changed the appearance of most of the rooms. As with the exterior, this application does not affect the rear of the property, or the upstairs floors, and so no further mention shall be made.

FRONT ROOM

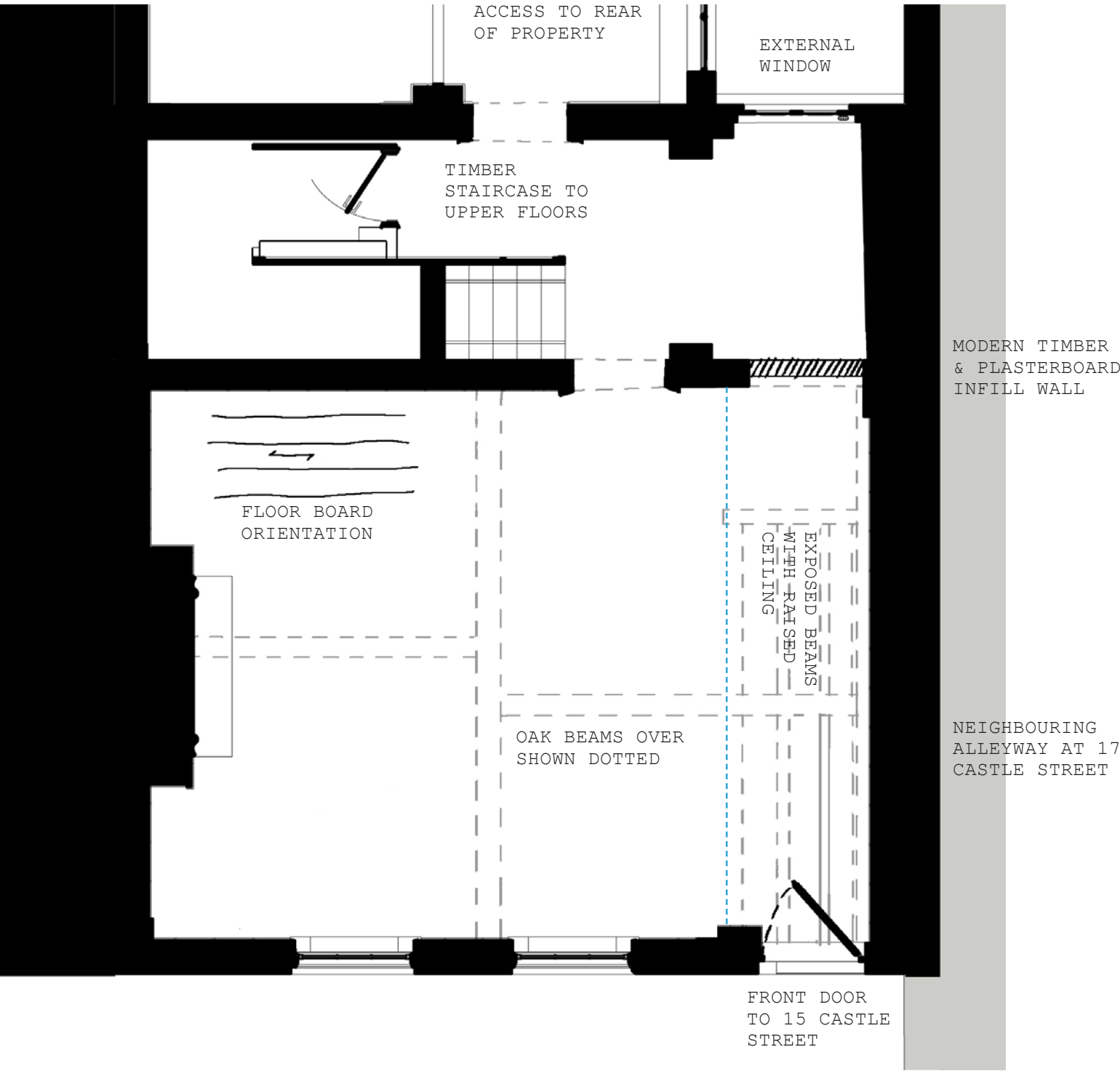
Happily the fewest alterations have occurred in the ground floor front room - the room to which this application relates. The floor boards are of wide format and appear in keeping with the age of the front cell. Internal walls have been panelled at various points in history, in generally matching format. Softwood timber is evident from the 1960s and softwood and MDF from the 1982 works but the appearance does match the early C20 panelling and lends a period feel to the rooms it is found in.

The front room contains in its western corner the front door to the property. This opening is likely original although the door leaf is newer. Inside and in alignment with the front door, there can be seen a c.1m section of exposed oak floor joists supporting the first floor, and a larger cross-beam traversing the room. A modern plasterboard ceiling covers the rest of the room.

PARTITION

It is expected that the separation between new ceiling and exposed structure marks the line of a previously existing partition that would likely have existed in the original house plan. This partition would have separated the primary ground floor space from the entrance and allowed separate access to the staircase behind.

This application seeks to reinstate a partition in the same place as we expect the original once stood. Currently there is no visible evidence to locate the partition, but it is likely that opening up would reveal that.



AS EXISTING GROUND FLOOR PLAN OF 15 CASTLE STREET (FRONT CELL) SHOWING ASSUMED LINE OF FORMER PARTITION SHOWN BLUE.

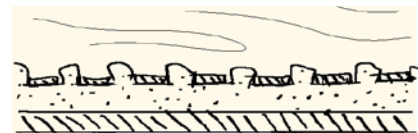
06 PROPOSALS

PARTITION

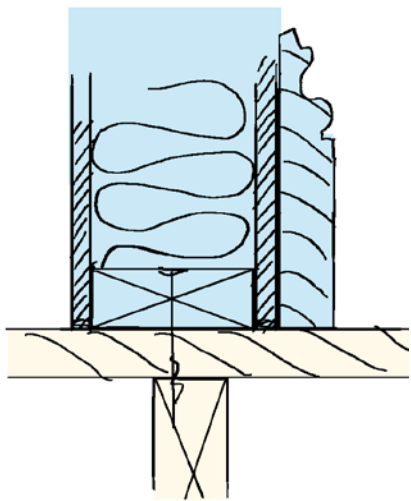
This application seeks to erect a new partition as identified in the drawings. It is likely that a partition stood in this location when the building was first built.

We do not propose any opening-up work as, while this may find details of what was formerly built in this location, there would be potential to harm such details and the loss of some historic fabric would be likely. While the harm done in such investigative work would be minor, this proposal seeks to avoid such harm and instead proposes a partition to be surface fixed with the focus on reversibility.

On this basis the new partition is proposed of lightweight construction, being fixed with a sole plate and head plate directly over the existing fabric with minor intervention. Where the proposed partition meets existing walls, it is proposed to fix into the masonry through the existing plaster. This would be fully demountable and the remaining screw holes represent the lowest removal of historic fabric.



CEILING ABUTMENT DETAIL



FLOOR ABUTMENT DETAIL

EXPECTED EXISTING CEILING MAKEUP OF MODERN PLASTERBOARD OVER HISTORIC LATH AND PLASTER CEILING AND FLOOR JOISTS

TIMBER WALL PLATE FIXED THROUGH CEILING

PLASTERBOARD FACINGS AND MINERAL WOOL INSULATION

EXISTING BRICK WALL WITH HISTORIC PLASTER FINISH

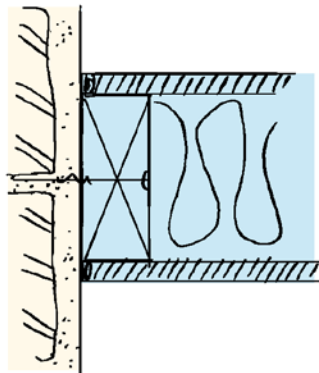
TIMBER STUD FIXED WITH MASONRY HAMMER FIXINGS

PLASTERBOARD AND MINERAL WOOL INSULATION

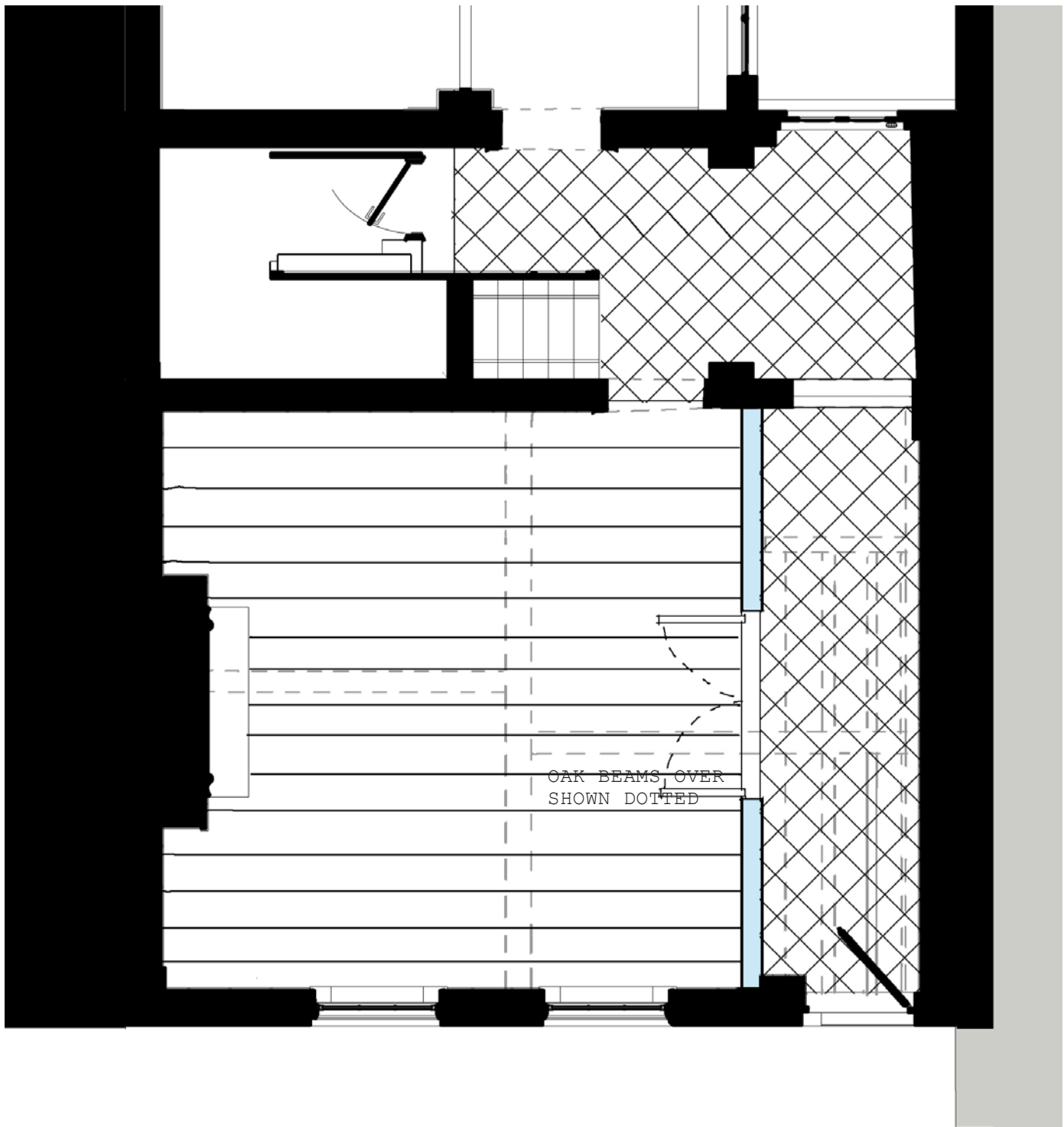
PLASTERBOARD FACINGS AND MINERAL WOOL INSULATION WITH SKIRTINGS AND ARCHITRAVES SELECTED TO MATCH THOSE EXISTING

TIMBER SOLE PLATE FIXED THROUGH FLOORBOARDS

EXISTING ELM FLOORBOARDS TO BE RETAINED



WALL ABUTMENT DETAIL



AS PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN OF 15 CASTLE STREET (FRONT CELL) SHOWING LOCATION OF NEW PARTITION IN BLUE

06 PROPOSALS

WALL PANELLING

The new partition would be dressed on both sides with timber panelling to match that which can be seen in the existing front room. While the existing panelling does not appear original it does lend an attractive period character to the room and it is proposed to extend around the whole room to suit the likely historic appearance. The proposed timber panelling is to be painted in a matching colour to the existing timberwork.

The wall above the timber panelling is painted in a matching colour to avoid re-painting the whole room.

DOOR OPENING

It is likely that this partition would have had an opening and in this room the fireplace is a central feature. As such the door opening is proposed to be centred on the fireplace. The doors are in a traditional style with glazed lights and timber construction. Architrave will be chosen to match the existing profile found at the adjacent doorways.

TIMBER DOUBLE DOORSET
WITH GLAZED LIGHTS IN
CENTRAL OPENING



PAINTED WALL TO
MATCH ADJACENT
WALLS

TIMBER PANELLING
TO MATCH EXISTING
ON ADJACENT WALL

AS PROPOSED SECTION THROUGH THE GROUND FLOOR FRONT ROOM SHOWING THE NEW PARTITION
IN ELEVATION. THE REVERSE SIDE WOULD HAVE THE SAME APPEARANCE.

07 CONCLUSIONS

SIGNIFICANCE

15 Castle Street has significance in that it is a surviving C16 frontage forming an attractive part of a conservation area

The target building holds significance in the evidence it displays about the growth of Reading, and how the land has been used for over 400 years

IMPACT

The proposals have been assessed for their impact on the significance, and have been found to support this in their reinstatement of a partition where it is likely that one once stood

The proposals have been designed to reduce harm to the existing fabric by reducing the amount of invasive work being carried out

It is our view that these proposals represent no harm to the significance of the asset, and bring minor benefit in the reinstatement of the new partition. On this basis we consider the proposals to be a welcome addition in the long-term sustainable future of 15 Castle Street.



EXISTING ARCHITRAVE (LEFT) AND TIMBER PANELLING (RIGHT) AT 15 CASTLE STREET TO BE USED AS REFERENCE FOR PROPOSED JOINERY DETAILS "TO MATCH EXISTING"