

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT FOR LISTED BUILDING CONSENT

Ward: Abbey Ward

App Ref: PL/25/0057

Address: FLAT 5, 168 CASTLE HILL, READING, RG1 7RP

Proposals: Retrospective Listed Building Consent for prior completed internal works

Case Officer: Mishga Marshall

Date received (valid from): 13/01/2025

Target Decision date: 16/04/2025

[Agreed EOT Decision date]: 23/04/2025

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is a large four-story terraced dwelling situated within the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area and dates back to approximately the late 1800's or early 1900's. The site is located on the north side of Castle Hill, which is a predominantly residential road consisting of mainly late 1800's and early 1900's (estimated) terraced and semi-detached houses which are of a similar age and style to the dwelling on the application site. The application site is a Grade II Listed Building.

PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

This application is for retrospective listed building consent for previously completed internal works to a unit in 168 Castle Hill. In the 1983 Lease Plan, the front door of the property opens into the backroom where a bathroom and kitchen were located. The front room of the property was split between a bedroom and living room area. The prior alterations made were to change the entrance into the front room from the back. The kitchen has been relocated from the back room to the front room which is now split between a kitchen and living room area. The bedroom, previously in the front room, is now situated in the backroom and the bathroom remains in a similar location. Due to the conversion of no.168 into flats, much of the historic planform has been lost, however several features of interest remain, including sections of original cornicing and skirting.

SITE VISIT

Site visit date: 10/03/2025

PLANS AND DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED RECIEVED [13/01/2025 & 20/02/2025]

- Location Plan - 12/01/2025
- Design and Access Statement - 12/01/2025
- Apartment Lease - 09/08/1983
- Existing Floor Plan
- [H01209]168 Castle Hill Heritage Statement - 19/02/2025

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

N/A

CONSULTATIONS

Public Consultations:

Site notice displayed on 03/03/2025

No letters of representation have been received.

External Consultations:

Conservation Officer: No objections to the works at Flat 5, 168 Castle Street.

Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee: No comments received.

EQUALITY ACT 2010:

In determining this application, the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore, in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the LPA to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

National Planning Practice Guidance 2014 onwards

Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance 2008

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1 (Presumption in favour of sustainable development)

CC2 (Sustainable design and construction)

CC7 (Design and the public realm)

CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity)

EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment)

EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas)

SPD

Design Guide to House Extensions SPG 2021

[Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road](#) Conservation Area Appraisal

OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION / GUIDANCE / LEGISLATION

Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking (Historic England, 2015a)

Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England, 2015b)

Principles of Conservation (Historic England, 2008)

Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings (British Standards Publication BS 7913:2013, 2015)

OFFICER ASSESSMENT

Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) requires that development must be of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area.

As the building is a Grade II Listed Building, there is a duty imposed by Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requiring decision makers to have special regard to the desirability of preserving its setting or any features of special architectural historic interest which it possesses.

This is reflected in Policies EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) that states “historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced”.

Paragraph 196 of the NPPF states plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:

- a) The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
- d) opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

Paragraph 200 of the NPPF details 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. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

Policy EN3 states “The special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced. Development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.”

No external alterations have taken place. The Council's Conservation Officer has confirmed that there is no objection to the works that have been carried out, commenting specifically:

- The installation of bathroom in the same location was consented in the 1980s so the existing bathroom and toilet has services like piping etc. which also provides water to the kitchen / open plan kitchen adjacent. So the harm is minimal.
- The original size and layout of the space in use for bedroom and bathroom is legible through ceiling decoration and could also be considered reversible.

The changes which have taken place, are not considered to have resulted in any adverse harm to the significance, character and setting of the listed building and nor has there been any harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Given the nature of the proposals there would be no harm to neighbour amenity.

CONCLUSION

Having regard to the material considerations and all matters raised, the Local Planning Authority considers that the balance of considerations therefore weigh in favour of granting listed building consent.

OFFICER RECCOMENDATION

APPROVE