

109 Castle Hill

Reading RG1 7SX

DESIGN AND ACCESS AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

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Rev 02

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Revision History

Rev 00	Issued 11.08.2025	DRAFT ISSUE
Rev 01	Issued 12.08.2025	UPDATED ISSUE
Rev 02	Issued 13.08.2025	PLANNING ISSUE

This report is by Claire Truman RIBA Accredited Conservation Architect, IHBC Affiliate, of Heritage Revival, Reading.
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- 1.1 This Heritage Statement is submitted as part of the planning and listed building application for internal changes to the First Floor at 109 Castle Hill, Reading. The document is written to assist greater understanding of the impact of the proposals upon the historic significance of the listed building and the conservation area.
- 1.2 The proposal is to convert the current 1-bed flat (Flat 6) and the two studio flats (Flats 5 and 7) that occupy the First Floor of a four-floor town house, into one 2-bed flat. Each of the other floors - Basement, Ground and Second Floor - are occupied by one flat per floor. In converting the First Floor into one flat, this would be named 'Flat 3'. Only the communal spaces and the First Floor were available for inspection - the remaining spaces are privately occupied.
- 1.3 The applicant has pro-actively engaged with the council via the pre-app process, reference PL/25/0503. The proposals reflect the guidance received from this process. The main issues highlighted by RBC for consideration are:
- i) Heritage implications and design
 - ii) Housing density and mix
 - iii) Residential amenity
 - iv) Car parking
- 1.4 109 Castle Hill, is Grade II listed, and located within the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area, situated within Reading Borough Council, both considered a 'heritage asset' as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework and therefore merits consideration in planning decisions (2024).
- 1.5 109 Castle Hill was built in the early C19, sometime between 1802 and the 1830s (Historic England, 2025).
- 1.6 This document should be read in conjunction with the associated proposed drawings.
- 1.7 **Planning**
- Relevant planning policy are advised by RBC as follows:
- 1.7.1 Reading Borough Council Local Plan 2019:
- Policy CC1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
 - Policy CC7 – Design and the Public Realm
 - Policy CC8 – Safeguarding Amenity
 - Policy EN1 – Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
 - Policy EN3 – Enhancement of Conservation Areas
 - Policy H1 – Provision of Housing
 - Policy H5 – Standards for New Housing
 - Policy H7 – Protecting the Existing Housing Stock
 - Policy TR3 – Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

1.7.2 Submission Draft Local Plan Partial Update (2025):

Policy H2 – Density and Mix - advised by RBC as, "...considered relevant over the existing policy H2 which relies on outdated housing information" (PL/25/0503).

Application ref.	Summary	Date
95/00926/LB	Reconstruction of rear wall due to subsidence and associated internal remedial work. (Granted).	15.05.1996
95/00736/LB & 95/00682/FD	Proposed car parking to existing rear garden (109-111 Castle Hill). (Refused).	14.12.1995
87/TP/1274 & 87/TP/1273	Conversion of house into four flats. (Granted).	no date
86/TP/0384	Erection of 8 flats following demolition of outbuildings and boundary walls, conversion of 109 to provide 1 flat and 6 bedsits, erection of garages and formation of car parking areas and new access road. (Refused, dismissed at appeal).	no date
85/TP/0669	Refurbishment and repairs to effect use as flats and bedsits. Demolition of outbuildings, demolition of and rebuilding boundary walls. (Granted).	no date
85/TP/0647	4 new houses and 4 flats, access road and footpath, 20 car spaces and 5 garages, new boundary walls, continued use of 109 as 1 flat and 8 bedsits. (Refused).	no date
81/TP/0587	Alteration (LBC). (Refused).	no date
81/TP/0645	Erection of fence and enlargement of access (F). (Refused).	no date
79/TP/0228	Provision of car parking on forcourt. (Refused).	no date
0000009661	Kitchen and bathroom. (Granted). (1962).	no date

1.8 Relevant Planning History for 109 Castle Hill

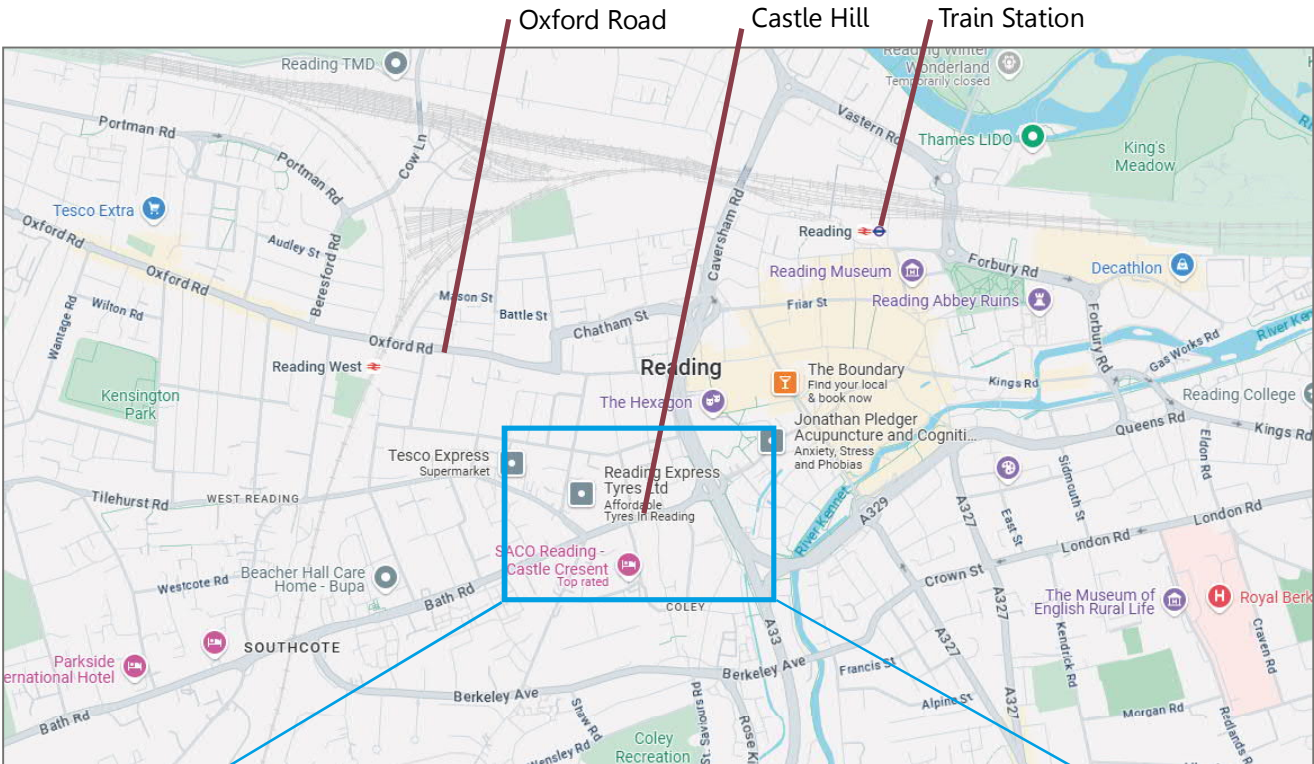


Image 1: Extract of the location of The Site within Reading (Google Maps, 2025)

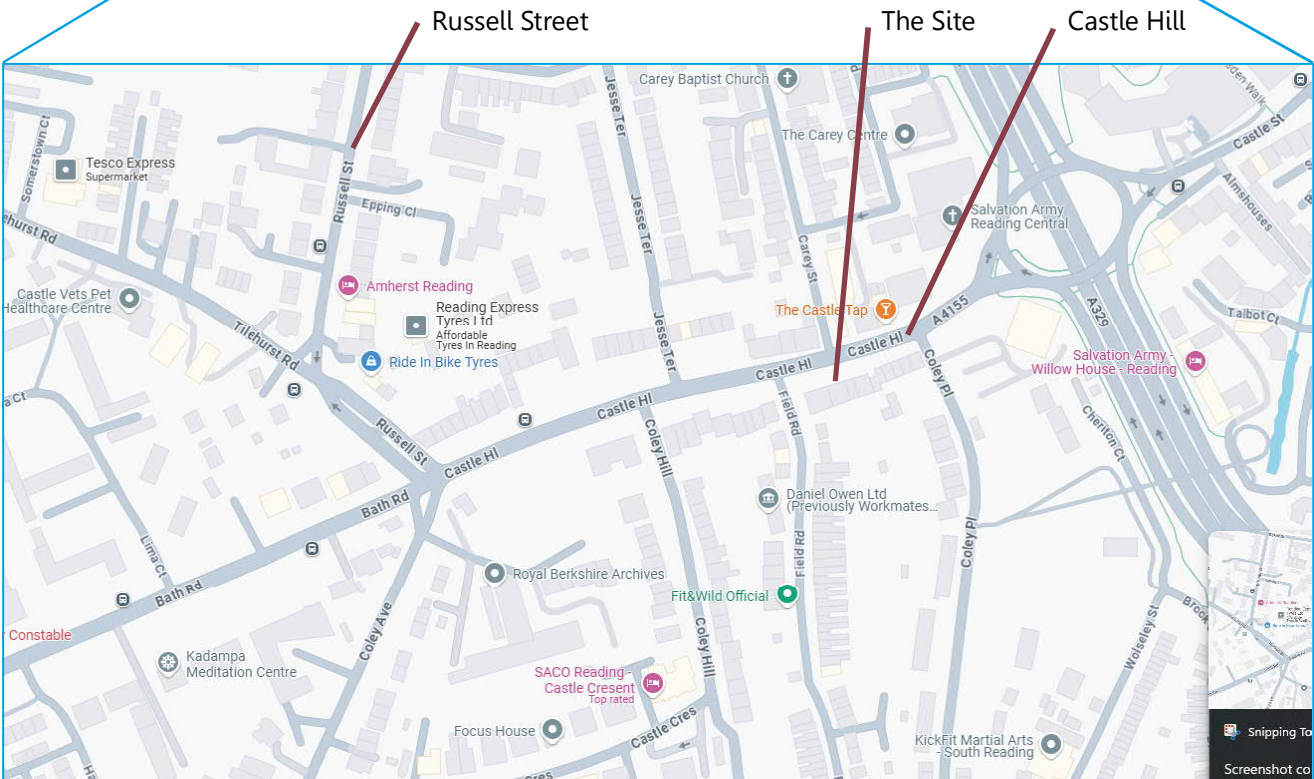


Image 2: Extract of the immediate locality of The Site (Google Maps, 2025)

1.9 Location

1.10 Historic Significance

1.10.1 Proposals relating to heritage assets are subject to the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF). Such proposals require to be justified under this legislation with respect to potential effect on the heritage asset. Consideration is given to the impact upon a heritage asset's 'significance' and its 'setting'.

1.10.2 'Significance' is defined in the NPPF as:

"The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting..." (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2024, Annex 2: Glossary).

1.10.3 The 'setting' of a heritage asset is defined in the NPPF as:

'The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.' (MHCLG, 2024, Annex 2: Glossary).

1.10.4 This Heritage Statement is written within the context of relevant best practice guidance:

- Historic England (2008). Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance.

1.10.5 The scope of the Heritage Statement is developed to be proportionate to the proposals in accordance to paragraph 207 of the NPPF which states, "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" (2024, para. 207).

1.10.6 This Heritage Statement identifies the heritage assets with potential to be affected by the proposals, it then describes the heritage assets' significance, and the document then analyses the potential impact of the proposals upon the significance of the heritage assets.

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS

2.1 Historical Context

2.1.1 The Site is located to the west of the centre of Reading. It is located within the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area - one of 15 conservation areas in Reading. The conservation area lies on a hill to the west of Reading's medieval core, and has four character areas: Character Area 2 comprises Castle Hill, as a western extension to Castle Street (refer to Image 3, below).

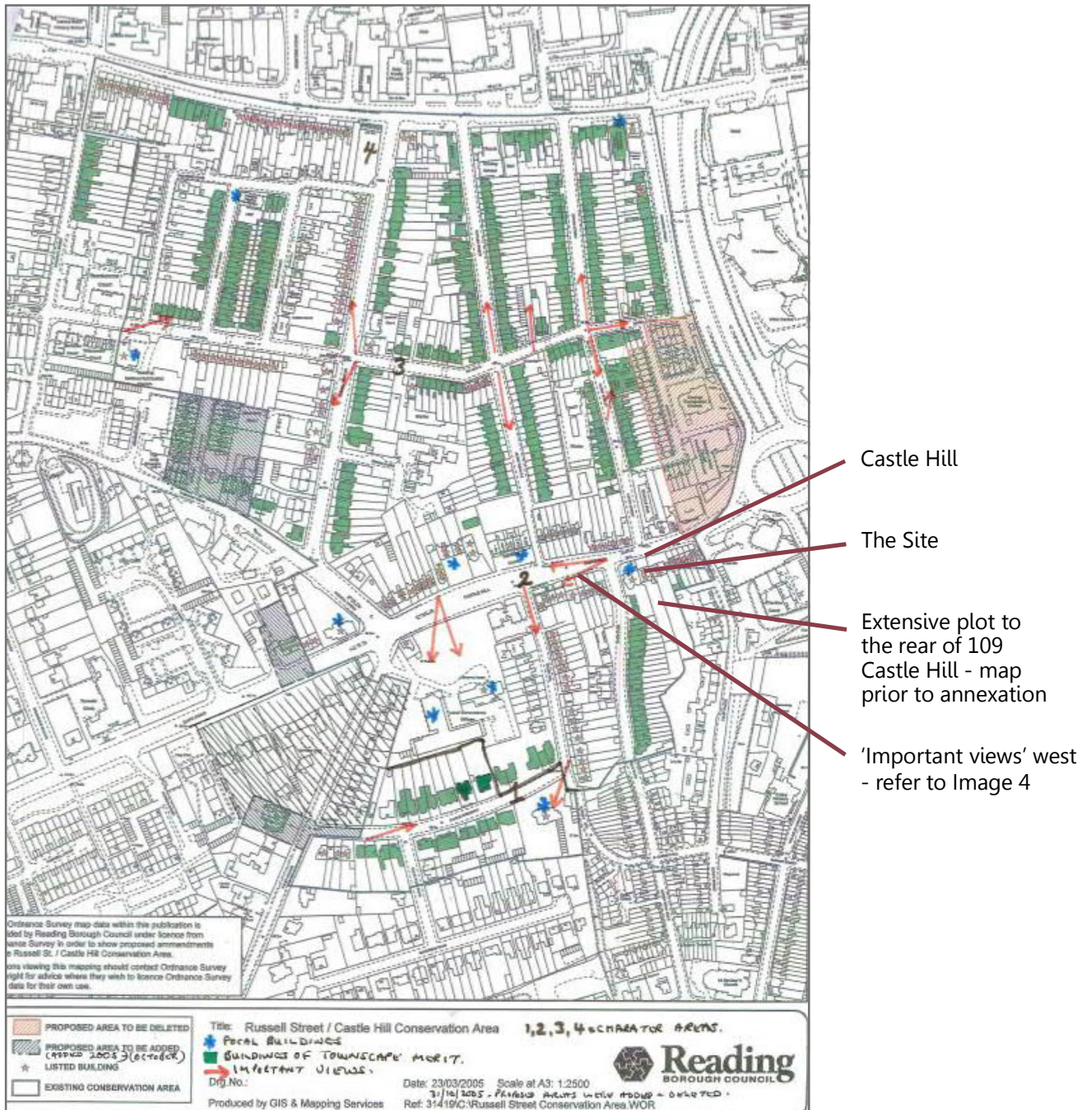


Image 3: Extract from the Conservation Appraisal document showing the conservation area split into four character areas (1-4) (RBC, 2004)

2.2 Conservation Area - A Heritage Asset

- 2.2.1 It is understood Reading once had a castle and some believe this was on the high ground to the west of the town (RBC, 2023). With Castle Street directly connected to St. Mary's Butts, and the original Saxon market place location, this medieval road west - which connected Reading to Bath - is a possible location for such a castle, however hostilities between King Stephen and Empress Matilda (daughter of King Henry 1) caused the castle to be destroyed in 1151 (ibid). The Reading Historic Area Assessment (Reading HAA) describes Castle Hill as, "...a rare survivor in the town in an area that is mostly unaffected by macro development in the 20th and 21st centuries (2023).
- 2.2.2 Castle Hill saw affluent people of Reading moving here in the C18, away from the pollution and noise of the town centre - the period from the 1740s to the early 1900 is described as a period of 'expansion' in the Reading HAA (RBC, 2023); by the end of the C19 the wealthy had largely moved away from Castle Hill, with larger properties becoming sub-divided, or demolished.



Image 4: View from Castle Hill opposite No. 109, west towards the Bath Road - an 'Important View' (June, 2025)

- 2.2.3 Drawing upon both the Conservation Area Appraisal document, and the Reading HAA, the key characteristics of Character Area 2 are summarised as:
- the high proportion of surviving C18 and C19 terraced houses
 - the high quality urban space with the wide road of Castle Hill creating dynamic views as one moves from the town west, and back towards the town centre towards St. Mary's Butts
 - the character of the urban environment that attests to a 'well-to-do' C18/C19 suburb of Reading
 - the domestic character of properties set back from the road with verdant front gardens and trees

2.3 Historic Environment Record

2.3.1 The Historic Environment Record (via the website Heritage Gateway) identified the following records Late Bronze Age to Iron Age (1000 BC to 42 AD) coins and pottery have been found but their exact location is not known (HER number 02058.00.000). Similarly:

- three Bronze Age spearheads and a ferrule (HER number 02044.00.000);
- a (Late Neolithic to Early Bronze Age - 3000 BC to 1501 BC) flint arrowhead (HER number 02050.00.000);
- and an early medieval bowl (HER number 02106.00.000);

have all been attributed to the same location, close to 109 Castle Hill at 111 Castle Hill (Heritage Gateway, 2025) - refer to Image 5, below.

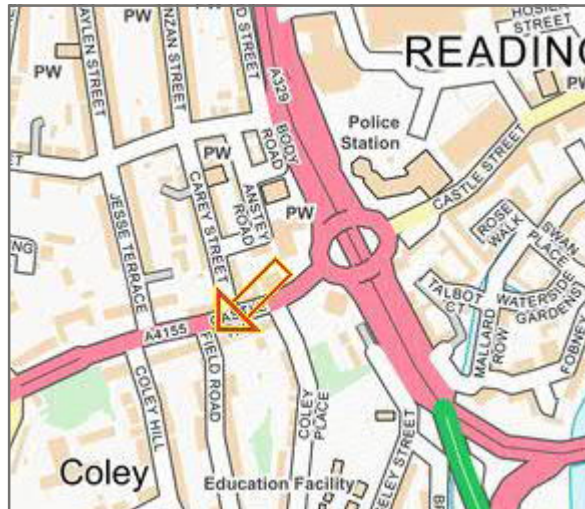


Image 5: Extract from the HER showing location of HER No. 02058.00.000 (Heritage Gateway 2025)

2.3.2 A later Bronze Age pit on land at 1-3 Castle Crescent (HER number MRM18300) - refer to Image 6, below.

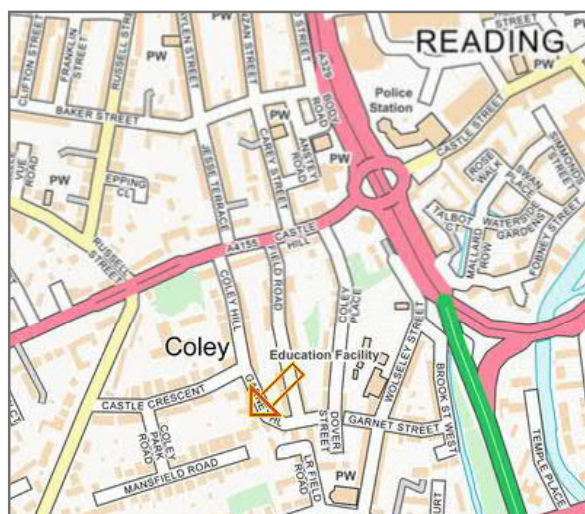


Image 6: Extract from the HER showing location of HER No. MRM18300 (Heritage Gateway 2025)

2.4 **109 Castle Hill - Grade II Listed Heritage Asset**

2.4.1 **List Description**

Grade II

List entry number: 1113422

Date first listed: 14.12.1978

Description Updated: 02.01.2024

"109 Castle Hill, Reading, is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

Architectural interest:

- as an early-C19 building which contributes to the character of an architecturally varied historic streetscape.

Group value:

- the building is in close proximity to a large number of listed buildings and forms part of a strong historic grouping.

"Details

A house, built in the early C19, now flats.

MATERIALS AND PLAN: the building is stuccoed with a timber eaves cornice. The pitched roof covering is slate. The house is of two storeys with an attic and semi-basement.

EXTERIOR: the road front facing Castle Hill has three bays with two modern dormers to the attic. The semi-basement and raised ground floor are embellished with smooth-faced rusticated stucco with keystones above the doorway and windows. Windows across the front have central sashes with margin lights to the sides, except for the narrower right-hand bay. The basement contains three windows. The main entrance, on the westernmost bay of the raised ground floor is accessed via a flight of stone steps with iron handrails. The doorway consists of a two-panelled door with an unadorned rectangular fanlight above. A plat band runs across the elevation at first-floor ceiling height. The first floor is smooth rendered. All of the windows apart from that underneath the doorway have stone sills painted black. There is a modillioned timber eaves cornice. The square dormers appear modern and contain two-pane casements.

The rear elevation, largely concealed from the street, is rendered and contains full-height casements on the raised ground floor and two sash windows on the first floor. There is a dormer above the westernmost bay.

INTERIOR: it is understood that the hallway contains the original stairs with a wreathed curtain to the ground-floor terminus."

(Historic England, 2025)

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

2.4.2 109 Castle Hill is one of a number of Grade II listed buildings that lie along Castle Hill - refer to the cluster of these - shown in black - in Image 7, below.



Image 7: Extract from 'Map Showing Existing Heritage Assets in Character Area 6.2' (RBC, 2023)

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

2.4.3 The Ordnance Survey map from 1876 shows 109 Castle Hill as being called Wingham House, nestled between Camden House (107 Castle Hill) and Marlborough House (111 Castle Hill). Wingham House has a long garden, but shorter in length compared to its two immediate neighbours, and an awkward angle set out at the boundary between it and Marlborough House (List Entry Number 1321960). At this time Marlborough House was a boys' prep school (since 1848). The rear aspect of Wingham House was verdant across the adjacent plots, with only a narrow footpath in the location of what is now Field Road. The garden to Wingham House appears to be formally set out - refer to Image 8b.

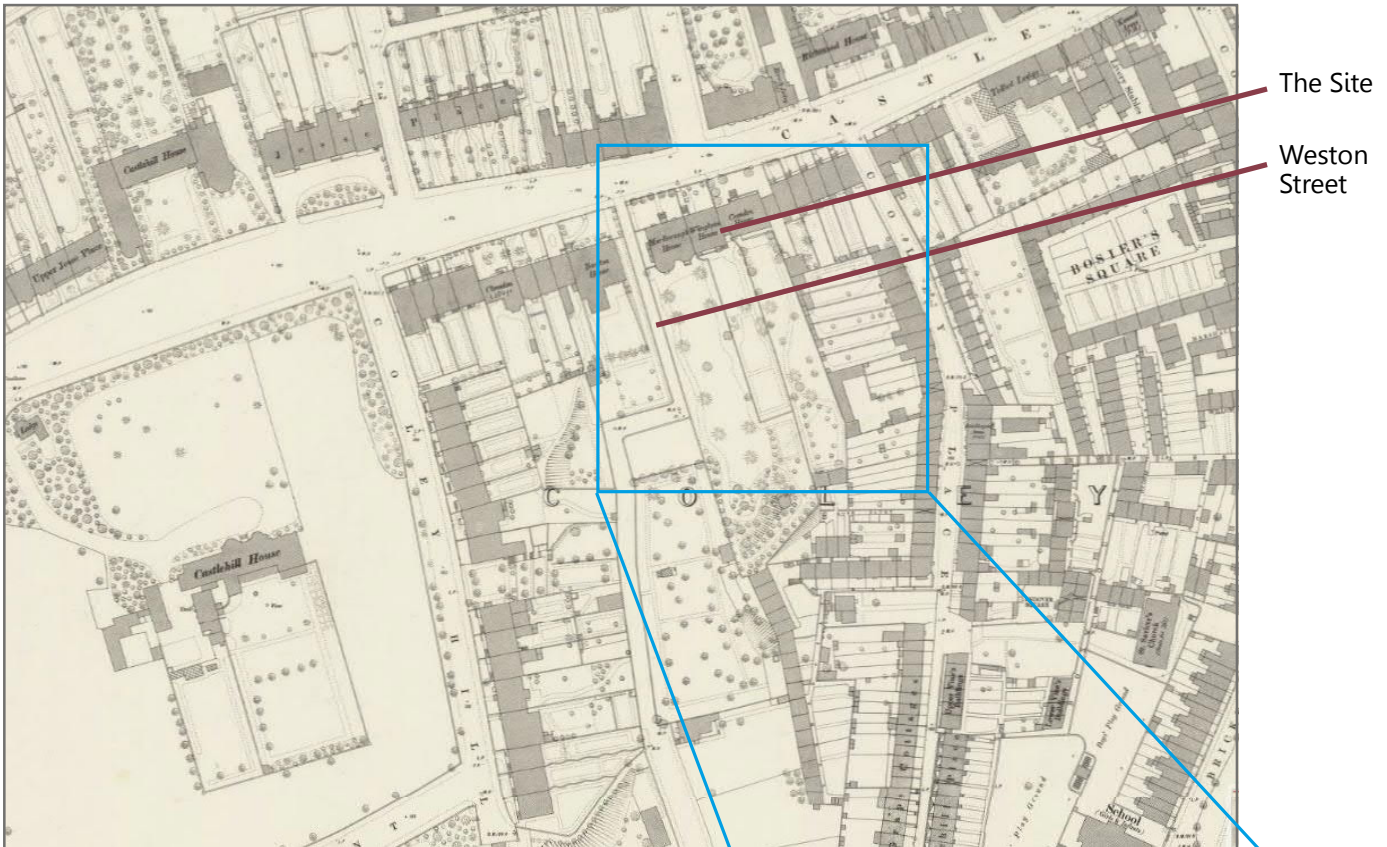


Image 8a: Extract of Ordnance Survey map of 1876, Reading - Berkshire XXXVII.3.17, published 1879 (National Library of Scotland, 2025)

The Site

The Webster's Reading Directory of 1874 does not list 109 Castle Hill, but it does list 107 (Camden House) as being occupied by 'H.P.Dawson'.

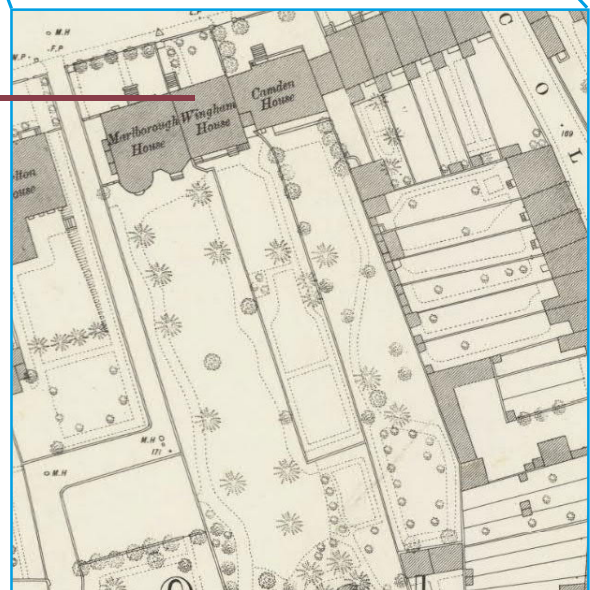


Image 8b: Detail of Image 8a
109 Castle Hill, Reading

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

2.4.4 The OS map of 1898 shows no change to the outline of Wingham House, or its boundaries with its neighbours. The Kelly's Directory of 1899 lists No. 109 as being occupied by Robert Arnold Barker (a surgeon), No.111 remained a prep school, and 107 was occupied by Gerald Edward March MD, physician, which reflects generally occupation by educated, highly respected members of the community.



Image 9a: Extract of Ordnance Survey map of 1898, Reading Berkshire XXXVII.3, published 1900 (National Library of Scotland, 2025)



Image 9b: Detail of Image 9a
109 Castle Hill, Reading

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

2.4.5 The OS map of 1909/10 shows large-scale urban change, with the introduction of the tram along Castle Hill, the widening of the pathway by the demolition of No.113 Castle Hill to create Field Road, and what appears to be a coordinated sell-off of the rear gardens of both 109 and 111 Castle Hill to create a series of terraced houses with rear amenity spaces.



Image 10a: Extract of the Berkshire XXXVII.3 map from 1909/10, published 1912 (National Library of Scotland, 2025).

Path widened,
No.113 demolished
and Field Road
created

Terraced houses
created to rear
of 109 and 111
Castle Hill

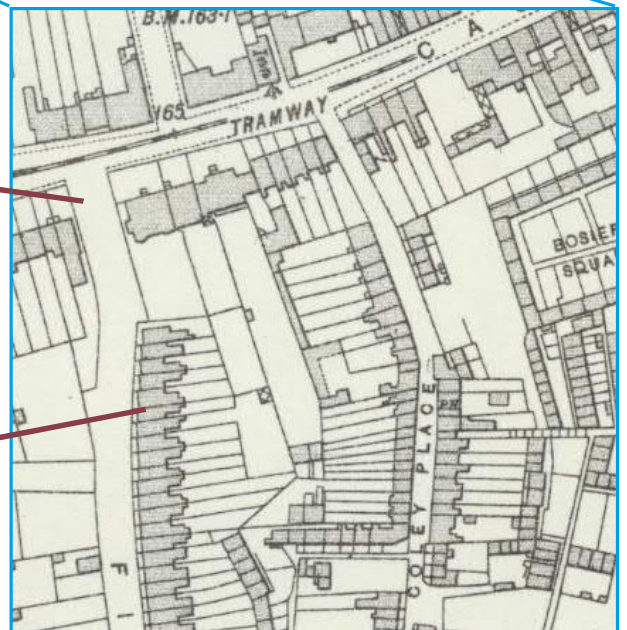


Image 10b: Detail of Image 10a

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

2.4.6 There is little change to The Site in the 1931/32 map, albeit the tramway is indicated as not in use.



Image 11a: Extract of the Berkshire XXXVII.3 map from 1931/32, published 1934 (National Library of Scotland, 2025).

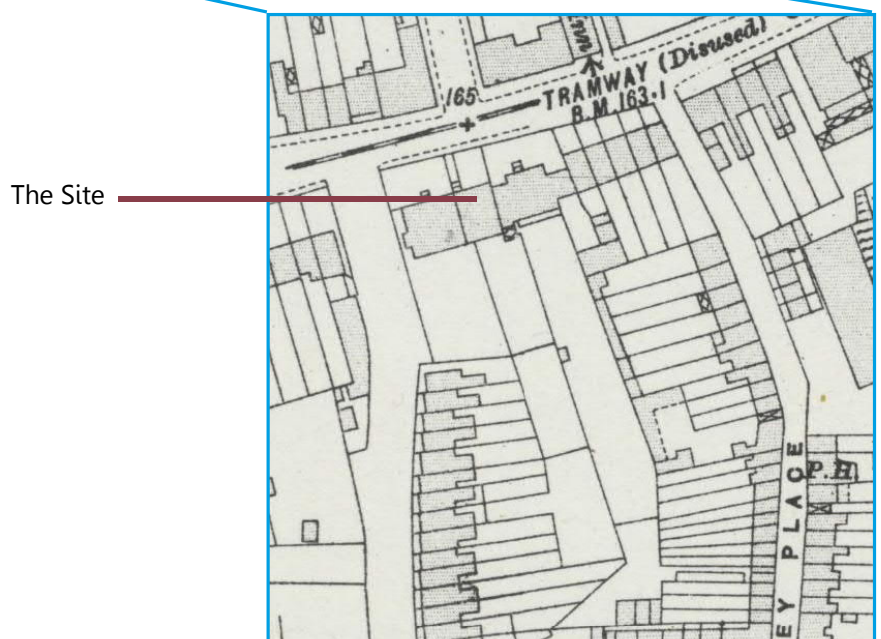


Image 11b: Detail of Image 11a

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

2.4.7 The map of 1938 shows no discernible change to the Site compared to the previous OS map.



Image 12: Extract of the Berkshire XXXVII.NE map from 1938. Published: 1944. (National Library of Scotland, 2025).



Image 13: Extract of a photograph from the Draft Conservation Area Approval document which shows 107-111 Castle Hill together, unobstructed by trees (RBC, 2020). All have a semi-basement plus 3 floors, however 109 appears rather smaller and less grand in scale compared to its neighbours
Photo credit: David Neale

2.5 Exterior Photographs - June 2025



The north elevation has three bays of fenestration, with the east and middle bays of triple set sash design, with narrow side lights. The entrance door is accessed via a long flight of steps - as noticeable on the OS maps - which had, in the past connected the visitor directly via a path to the street.

Image 14: View of north elevation with rusticated 'base' (Semi-Basement and raised Ground Floor)

111 Castle Hill

109 Castle Hill

Triple set sliding sash windows to First Floor

107 Castle Hill



Soil pipe serving Flat 6

Image 15: View of south elevation from the garden

2.5 Exterior Photographs (cntd)



Image 16: View from Field Road

Modern overlight window above entrance door - the rectangular shape may suggest the design dates from the 1830s when the availability of sheet glass saw the traceried fanlight design superseded (York, 2007).



Image 17: View of entrance steps and balustrade
109 Castle Hill, Reading

2.6 Interior Photographs - June 2025



Image 18: View of Ground Floor hallway

Overview

The property has been fully refurbished in the course of converting the single dwelling house into multiple tenanted.

Stained glass vestibule door to form entrance lobby

Staircase down to Basement - modern addition



Image 19: Curtil step with a cluster of square profile balusters supporting it; open-string staircase

Archway

Doors to Ground Floor rooms - only the right hand side one is currently in use as the entrance to Flat 2

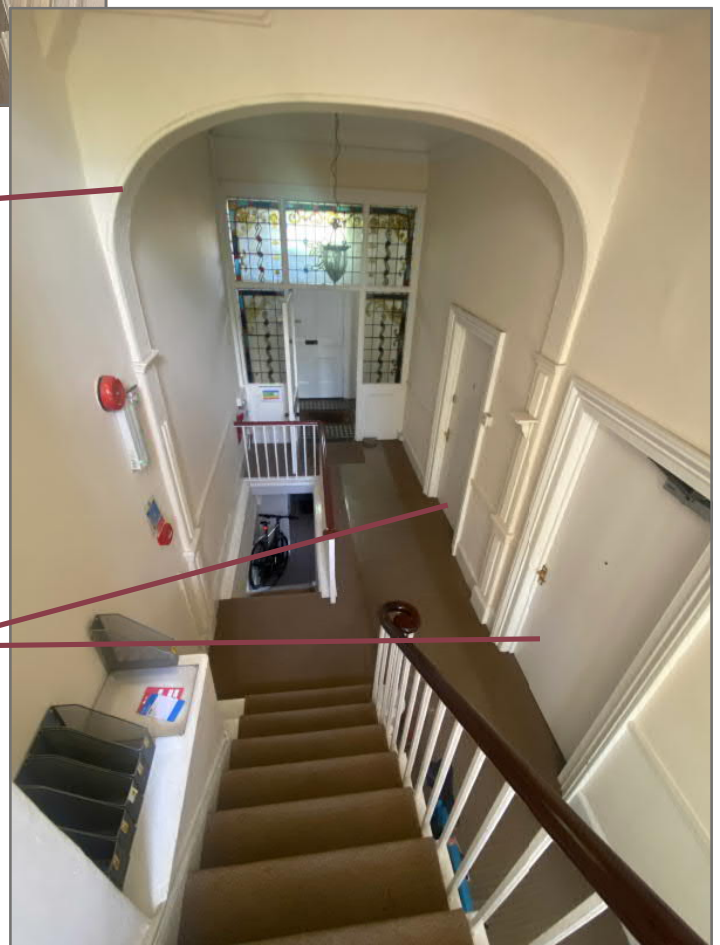


Image 20: View of hallway from staircase

2.5 Interior Photographs (cntd)
(cntd)



Image 21: View of staircase from First Floor landing

Modern door proposed to be removed and wall in-filled with lightweight stud work

Door proposed to be retained and relocated further into the hallway to meet Part B fire regulations for escape distances from Bedroom 1

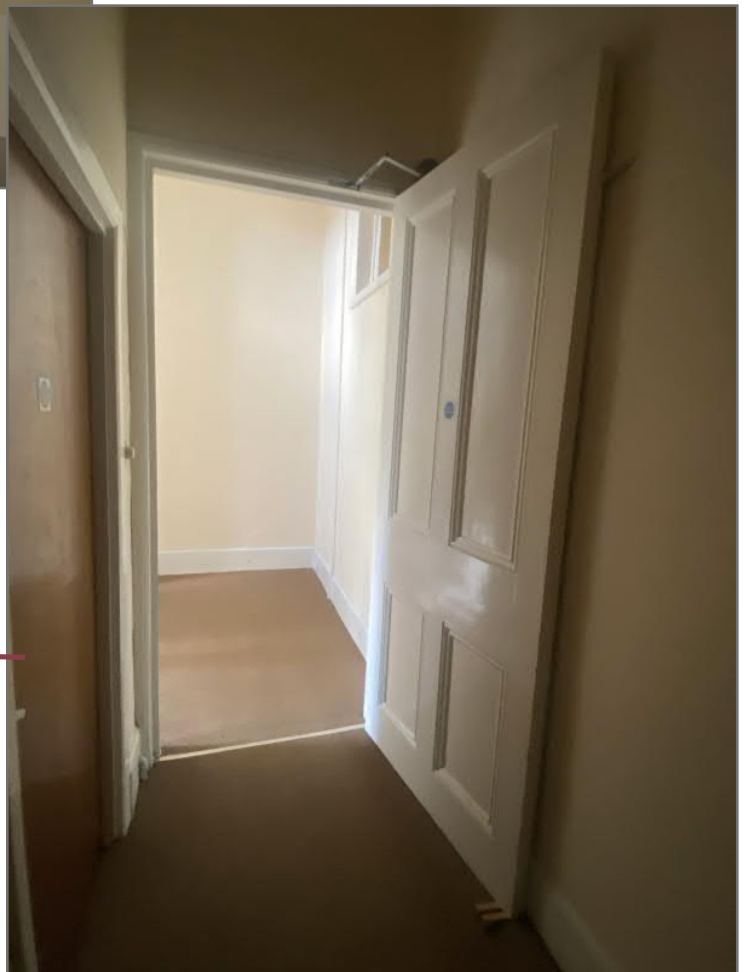


Image 22: Entrance door off staircase to First Floor flats

2.5 Interior Photographs (cntd) (cntd)

Gentle curve to chimney breast

Lightweight enclosure to kitchen

Fireplace surround - to be retained and refurbished

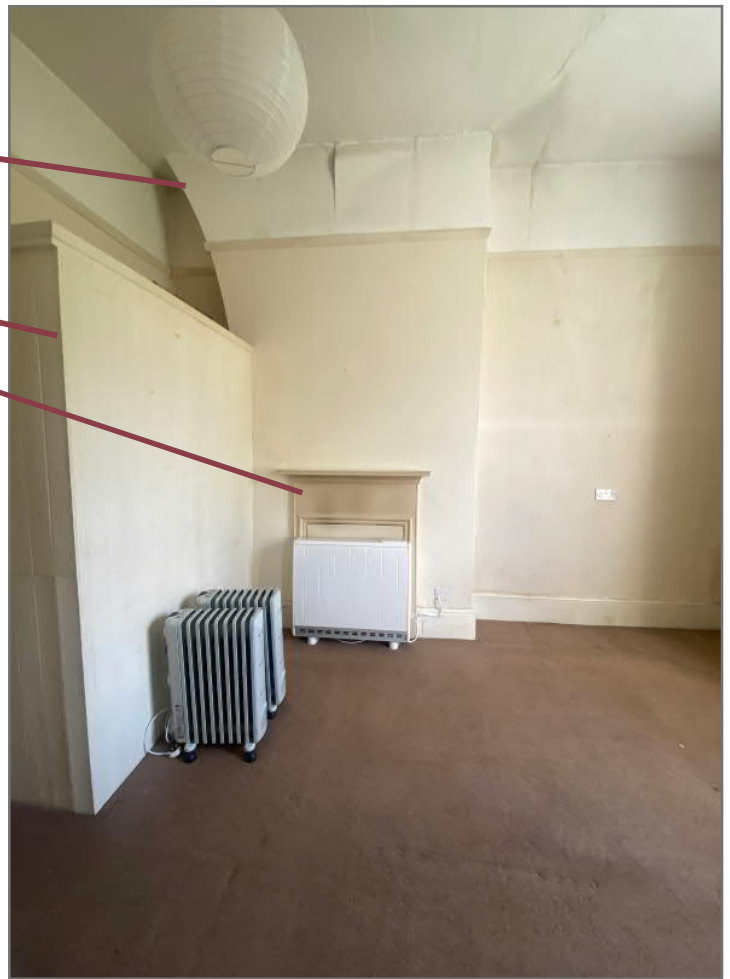


Image 23: View of rear flat (Flat 6) of fireplace, chimney breast and surround



Image 24: View of kitchen enclosure and entrance door to Flat 6



Image 25: View of kitchen window adjacent chimney breast in Flat 6

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

2.5 Interior Photographs (cntd) (cntd)



Shading device for
awning - room faces
south

Image 26: Lounge window, Flat 6



Shading device for
awning - room faces
south

Image 27: Bedroom window, Flat 6

2.5 Interior Photographs (cntd) (cntd)



Arch to be retained - it is unlikely to be original

Modern door within stud-work wall - proposed to be moved (left) by 100mm to enable storage to be created inside Bedroom 1

Modern doors proposed to be replaced with white painted timber panel doors (30 minute fire doors)

Image 28: Entrance doors to Flats 5 and 6

Modern lightweight walls, with overhead storage

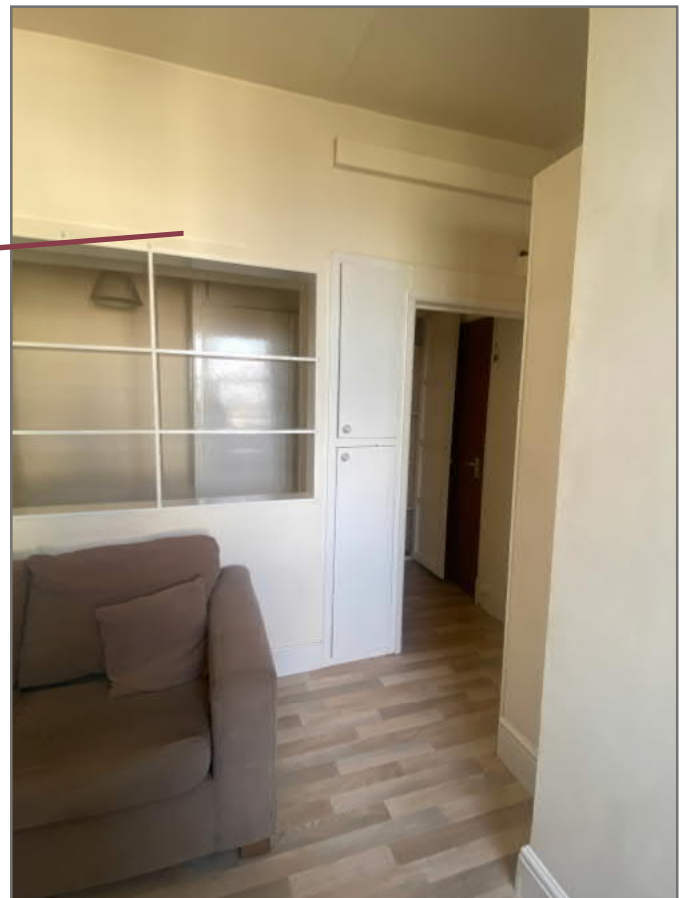


Image 29: Living space, Flat 5 - view towards entrance door

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

2.5 Interior Photographs (cntd) (cntd)



Image 30: Bathroom enclosure, Flat 5

Generally the rooms have high ceilings of 3.3m. There are very few retained features following the deep refurbishment to create the flats. The picture rail is a consistent feature to many of the spaces, however it is not evident in every main space; other joinery - skirting and doors - are modern. The floors below the floor finishes were not available for inspection. Three chimney breasts are evident, only one had a fireplace surround in-situ.



Chimney breast

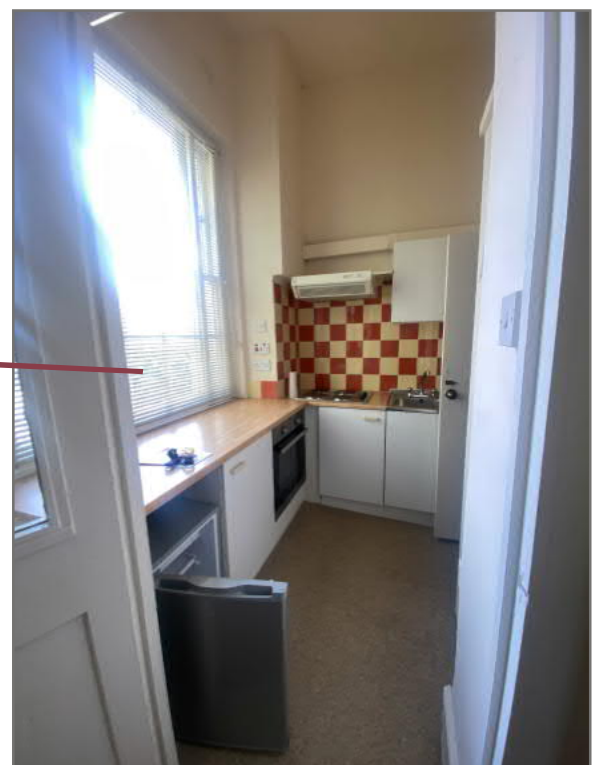
Image 31: Kitchenette, Flat 5
109 Castle Hill, Reading

2.5 Interior Photographs (cntd)
(cntd)



Door to kitchen and
bathroom

Image 32: Living space, Flat 7



Sash window is in
poor condition: the
bottom rail and cill
requires repair - refer
to Images 34a-c

Image 33: Kitchen, Flat 7; central sash window

2.5 Interior Photographs (cntd) (cntd)



Image 34a: View of timber cill of central sash window - the paint has cracked open and water has become trapped beneath it causing the timber to rot



Image 34b: View of bottom rail of sliding sash of central sash window - the joint has opened and caused the timber to rot



Image 34c: View of bottom rail of sliding sash of central sash window - the paint has failed and the timber below appears to be rotting

2.6 Plan Analysis

2.6.1 The period in which the house was constructed (1802 and 1830), was a transition period in architecture from the predominantly Georgian style (fashion) towards Victorian when Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837. The consistent 'Georgian' style of architecture along Castle Hill demonstrates within this cohort the wide variation of designs that could be adopted to demonstrate taste and wealth. As visible in the contextual photograph in Image 13 of the street view, and to some extent, from the rear view, it is noticeable that both Marlborough House and Camden House are stylistically of a higher order by comparison - both are of a symmetrical neo-classical design, with a central staircase to the entrance door, and to the rear mirrored two-storey bays - one canted and one semi-circular - are a striking feature of Marlborough House, clearly designed to embrace the gardens and aspect to the south. Camden House appears to be modelled on a countryside villa, with a low west range - adjoining 109 Castle Hill - and a stable block to the east. All three properties are thought to date from between 1802 and 1830 - a long window of 28 years.

109 Castle Hill is lower in height and presents an awkward boundary line with Marlborough House to the rear -noticeable in the OS maps. The entrance stair is not central, and the over door First Floor window is narrower and therefore. It seems possible the building was constructed after its two immediate neighbours - and had to adapt to its plot size. The possible later date of construction may have influenced the departure from the symetricality of the neo-classical design style, and may have reflected the personality of the person who commissioned the design, given it is 'off-beat' with its context. The Ground Floor is raised higher than either neighbour, which has raised the rustication of the stucco finish to an over-sized height compared to the First Floor proportion, and the resultant long entrance staircase flight is relatively bulky. The Ground Floor appears to have taken on the 'pi-ano noble' of the property - rather than the traditional First Floor - as revealed at the rear where the tall French windows are located to appreciate the south aspect and garden.

Overall, the design appears to break the neo-classical design 'rules' to create its own distinctive character, fitted in rather crudely between two neo-classically composed substantial houses. It is an intriguingly confident 'maverick' design and possibly reflects an era of transition and change in society. Given this, and the wholesale conversion of the single dwelling in the recent past into multiple flats, it is challenging to establish with confidence what the layout of the First Floor may have been. Typically, provided the exterior design appeared balanced, the interiors were laid out to suit the specific needs of the household, again, making it challenging to establish what might have been. This document does not seek to provide a theory of reconstruction, but from the visible evidence, a hierarchy of spaces can be established.

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

- 2.6.2 As outlined, the remaining of the property was not available to view, however a previous letting brochure includes images of a Ground Floor and Semi-Basement fireplaces. It would be unusual to install such an elaborate fireplace to a Semi-Basement and it cannot be confirmed if these are original.



Image 35a: Ground Floor fireplace to rear reception room



Image 35b: Semi-Basement Floor fireplace to rear reception room

- 2.6.3 Woodforde offers a typical Georgian townhouse plan which has parallels with 109 Castle Hill - refer to Image 35, below. The plan demonstrates how some spaces are compromised to fit into the space available, e.g. the off-centre chimney breast to the principal reception room, and the smaller room created off the staircase.

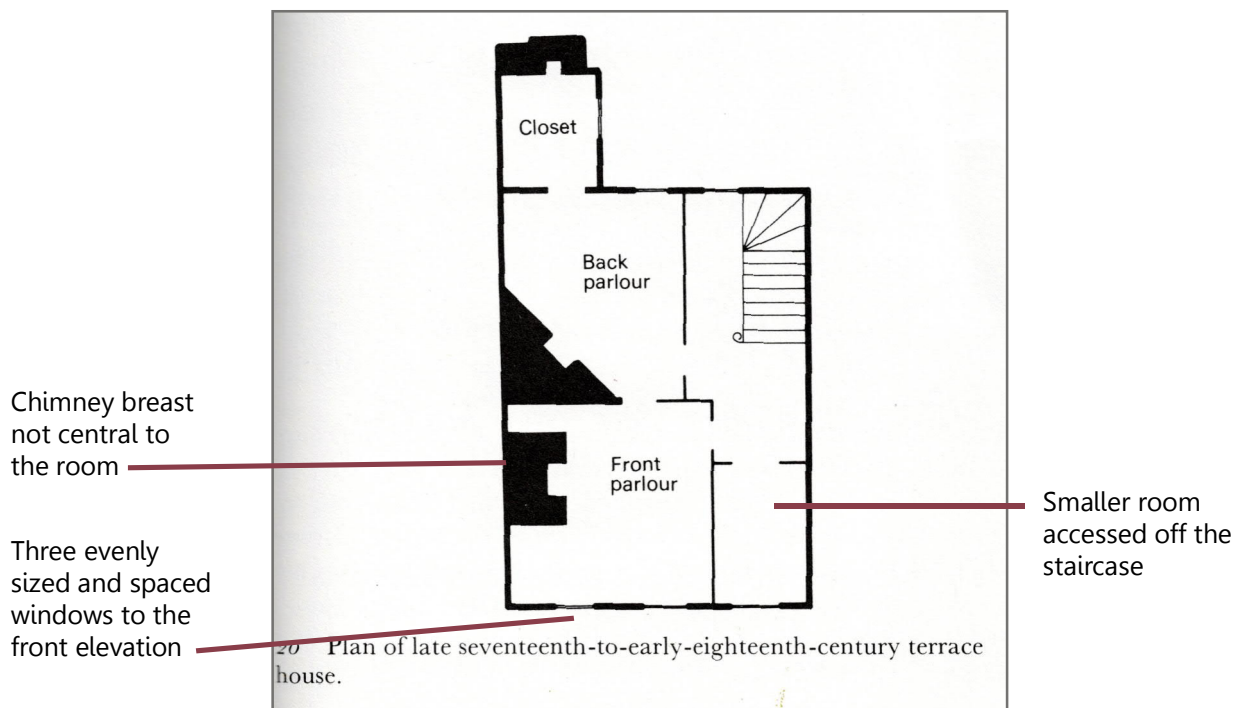
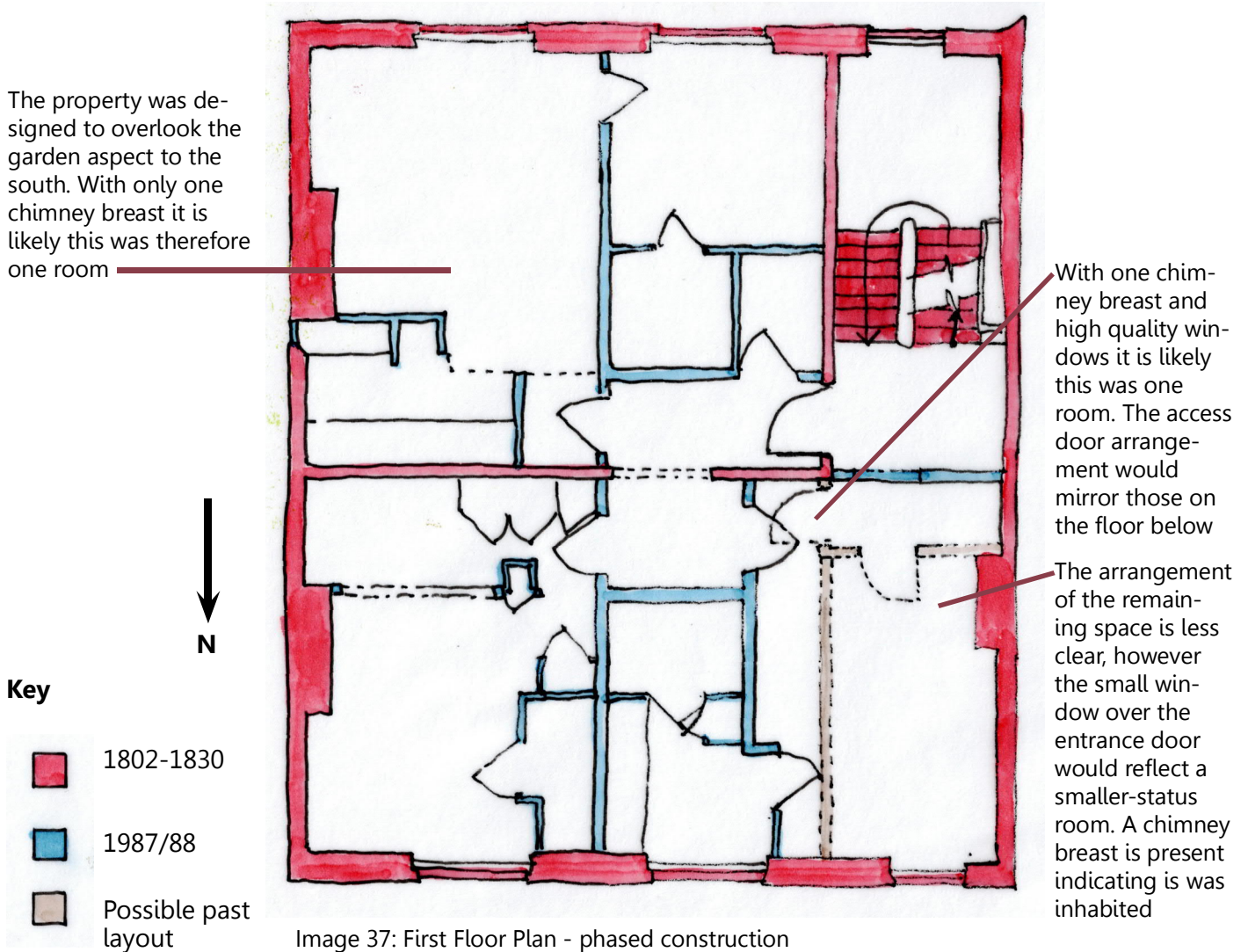


Image 36: Extract from 'Georgian Houses For All' (Woodforde, 1978)

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

2.6.4 At the Ground Floor of 109 Castle Hill there are two large doors adjacent one another leading to what could have been large reception rooms, with only the right one in use - refer to Image 20. It is possible this arrangement of doors was repeated at the First Floor. Following the inspection of the First Floor in June, and the historic evidence to hand it is conjectured below where the original room layouts may have been arranged.



3.1 Historic Significance

The assessment of significance depends of the asset type, a comparison with what exists elsewhere, and the extent it may be distinctive or have special meaning for different groups of people. The significance of heritage assets or their elements can be measured at different levels:

Value/Criteria	Description
Very High (international importance)	World Heritage Site - monuments and landscapes of comparable quality.
High (national significance)	Listed buildings Grade I or II*, conservation areas containing very important buildings, Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens Grade I or II*, non-designated sites or assets of comparable quality.
Medium (national significance)	Listed buildings Grade II, conservation areas , Registered Parks and Gardens Grade II.
Low	Buildings and areas of local interest, sites and archaeological remains not of national importance, historic landscapes of regional/county importance.
Negligible	Buildings/sites of little or no significance; an aspect (e.g. structure or feature) that has little or no value and therefore does not impact significance positively or negatively.
Negative	An aspect (e.g. structure or feature) that detracts from the significance of a heritage asset.

3.2 Historic Significance of Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area

Based on the tabulated criteria in 3.1, the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area, may be deemed to hold 'historic significance', via four values identified in the NPPF: archaeological, historic, architectural and artistic. These values shall be assessed using the following grading:

- High – values of *exceptional* or *considerable* interest;
- Medium – values of *some* interest;
- Low – values of *limited* interest.

3.2.1 Archaeological interest:

- The Historic Environment Record has identified a number of finds that may have been located close to the site - refer to paragraph 2.3.1.

The potential for the archaeology of the conservation area to hold historic interest is considered 'medium'.

3.2.2 Historic interest:

- As a potential early Medieval stronghold west of the centre of Reading - with a possible location for Reading Castle, and evidence for fortifications from the C17 civil war - there is historic interest in Castle Street and Castle Hill with respect to the urban and social development of Reading.

The level of historic interest is therefore 'medium'.

3.2.3 **Architectural and artistic interest:**

- The wide scale of Castle Hill with typically four-storey buildings set back from the road with front gardens

The architectural and artistic interest offers a 'medium' level of historic significance.

3.3 **Historic significance of 109 Castle Hill and its Setting**

Based on the tabulated criteria in 3.1, 109 Castle Hill, may be deemed to hold 'historic significance' at different levels, as per paragraph 3.2.

3.3.1 **Archaeological interest:**

- Similarly as paragraph 3.2.1 there is potential for archaeological interest.

The level of archaeological interest is therefore 'medium'.

3.3.2 **Historic interest:**

- Social-economic: the investment in the creation of the property appears to have been to create an expression of wealth and high social status to a wealthy suburb of Reading during a period of rapid industrial expansion of the town.
- The origins of the property: it has not been possible within the scope of this document to identify the family who commissioned the property, however this could be the subject of further research in the future
- The building has been of residential use since its construction, and its subdivision into flats reflects the wider trend along Castle Hill after the exodus of the higher status wealthy occupants towards the end of the C19.

The level of historic interest of 109 Castle Hill is considered to be 'medium'.

3.3.3 **Architectural and artistic interest:**

There appears to be very little 'original fabric' remaining internally to the First Floor of the property (refer to Image 36). A sense of the grandeur of the property is evident in the scale of the spaces - with the internal floor height of 3.4m (the Ground Floor is 3.6m) and the elegant triple set sash windows, and French doors to the rear elevation as a reflection of a 'piano noble'.

- The remaining original sash windows to both the front and rear elevations
- The external window blind boxes to the rear elevation
- The stuccoed rustication to the front of the property (compared to none to the rear) as an expression of social status onto the public road
- The internal vestibule entrance door lobby
- The main Ground to Second Floor half landing staircase (top half flight is modern)
- The retained fireplaces and joinery

The level of architectural and artistic interest are wholistically considered to have "medium' historic significance.

3.4 **Setting:**

Although not officially considered to be one of the four principal values, *setting* is recognised as a value that makes an important contribution to the significance of a heritage asset. An assessment of the contribution to significance is therefore included for assessing the effects of any proposed works on significance.

3.4.1 *Setting* is defined in the NPPF as, "The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral." (Annex 2: Glossary).

3.4.2 The setting, as contributes historic significance of 109 Castle Hill and the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area, is largely attributed to:

- The winding view east and west along Castle Hill framed between C18 and C19 domestic properties
- The verdant nature of Castle Hill - with mature trees and front gardens
- The high number of properties retained in close proximity from a similar era
- The scale of the collection of C18/C19 properties along Castle Hill - when constructed as single dwelling houses - has been retained despite their common sub-division into smaller dwellings.

4.0 THE PROPOSED WORK AND ITS IMPACT UPON THE HERITAGE ASSETS

- 4.1 Historic England and the NPPF offer guidance on how to approach the assessment of the impact of proposed works upon the significance of a heritage asset. In particular the following are considered relevant to 109 Castle Hill and its setting:
- 4.1.1 "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 (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance", (MHC&LG, 2024, para.212).
- 4.1.2 "Each generation should therefore shape and sustain the historic environment in ways that allow people to use, enjoy and benefit from it, without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same", (Conservation Principle 1.3, Historic England, 2008, p.19).
- 4.1.3 "Conservation involves people managing change to a significant place in its setting, in ways that will best sustain its heritage values, while recognising opportunities to reveal or reinforce those values for present and future generations", (Conservation Principle 4.2, Historic England, 2008, p.22).
- 4.1.4 With regards to the consideration of the effect of authenticity upon a heritage asset Historic England comment, "A desire to retain authenticity tends to suggest that any deliberate change to a significant place should be distinguishable, that is, its extent should be discernible through inspection. The degree of distinction that is appropriate must take account of the aesthetic values of the place", (2008, para. 93, p.45).

4.0 THE PROPOSED WORK AND ITS IMPACT UPON THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd)

4.2 Overview

The proposal is to change the First Floor of 109 Castle Hill from 3no. studio flats into 1no. 2-bed flat - it is noted each of the studio flats are currently registered for council tax with RBC. The redesign would reduce the occupation density, and the number of facilities that would require drainage management and humidity control from three bathrooms and three kitchens to one bathroom and one kitchen.

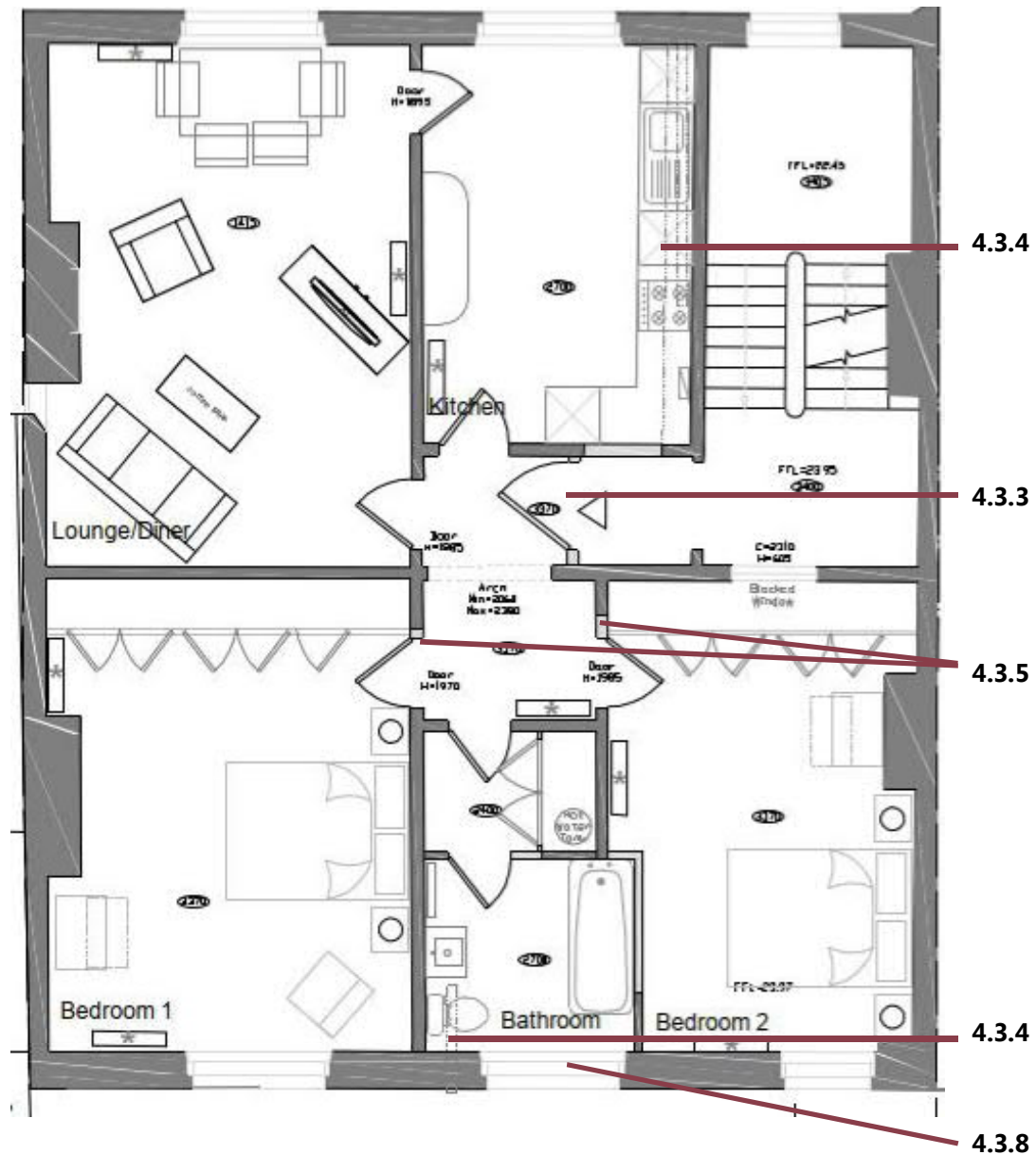


Image 38: Proposed First Floor Plan

4.3 **Proposed Works**

4.3.1 **The redesign of the First Floor - to retain existing original fabric**

The design proposes to retain the large scale spaces as far as possible and re-use the existing drainage routes to mitigate disruption to the floor structure. The main habitable spaces therefore occupy spaces where the existing 3.4m high ceilings can be enjoyed in proportion to the room sizes. The existing fire surround to Flat 6 (rear flat) shall be retained and refurbished. It is not currently known if there is a fire grate behind the over-boardings; where the original fireplace remains and is restorable this is proposed to improve the condition of the original fabric and re-establish the fireplace as the focal point to the space.

The chimney breasts shall be retained to the two spaces that shall become the two bedrooms. Where the picture rail exists to the main habitable spaces with 3.4m high ceilings, these shall be retained to improve the overall proportions of the rooms, as originally intended.

Impact upon historic significance: Positive

4.3.2 **Removal of inappropriate fittings**

The fittings and lightweight walls are proposed to be removed generally, this includes:

- i the removal of the kitchenettes;
- ii the removal of the bathrooms;
- iii the removal of the veneered fire doors;
- iv the removal of the existing water tanks;
- v the removal of the overhead storage spaces to Flats 5 and 6.

The impact of the removal of inappropriate fittings collectively is considered positive with respect to historic significance, as the current enclosed spaces (items i, ii and v) changes the intended scale of the rooms, and inhibits the reading of the original planform as large habitable rooms. Specifically, the removal of the kitchenette to Flat 6 (rear flat) will reveal the chimney breast to be central to the room as designed, to enhance the understanding of the original planform.

Impact upon historic significance: Positive

4.0 THE PROPOSED WORK AND ITS IMPACT UPON THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd)

4.3.3 The proposed adjustments necessary to meet building regulation requirements - Part B (fire)

With regards the current building regulations for fire safety, a maximum travel distance from the furthest point of a habitable room to the flat entrance is 9m - refer to the extract from Part B, below.

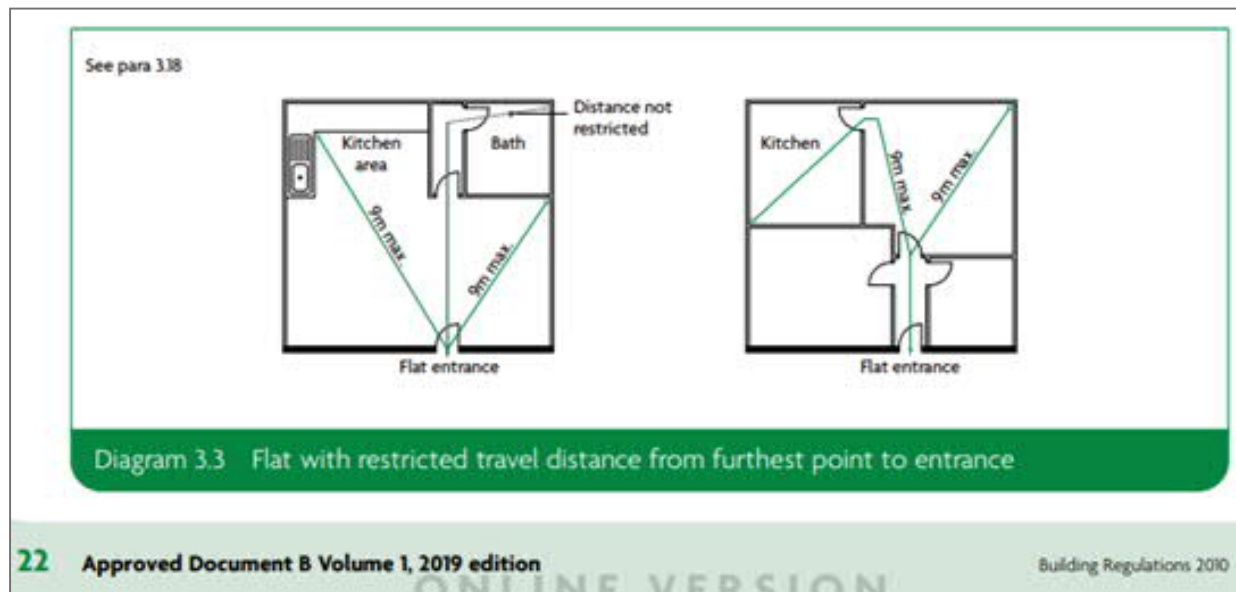


Image 39: Extract from Approved Document Part B of the building regulations guidance

In creating the two-bedroom flat the current entrance door is greater than 9m away from the furthest corner of Bedroom 1. It is therefore proposed to retain the existing opening and surrounding joinery, and relocate the current entrance door further into the flat to achieve this escape distance with the minimum disruption to the original fabric. It is not certain the existing door is original - as it is a four-panel door which is typically a 'Victorian' style and therefore suggests it is a later replacement. It is therefore doubtful any original fabric shall be impacted by this, however the scale of the door is proposed to be retained in the interests of historic significance of such an opening at this First Floor location. It is therefore deemed on balance to cause no harm to the historic significance of the property.

Impact upon historic significance: No harm

4.0 THE PROPOSED WORK AND ITS IMPACT UPON THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd)

4.3.4 The proposed adjustments necessary to meet building regulation requirements - Part F (ventilation)

To meet the current building regulations for mechanical ventilation to high humidity spaces extraction ventilation is proposed within the dropped ceiling of the kitchen over the hobs, to be taken to the outside wall where a white vent is proposed to be inserted into the white painted brickwork. For the bathroom similarly the high humidity space requires mechanical ventilation to the outside and the ducted ventilation would be run within the dropped ceiling and out to the outside wall. Refer to Images 40a and b below for details of the proposed ventilation fittings, and the proposed locations on drawing 1345-HR-A-TP-0202.



Image 40a: The proposed white ventilation grille for kitchen (rear elevation)



Image 40b: The proposed white ventilation grille for bathroom

The effective management of internal humidity from internal spaces is essential for the appropriate care of traditional building materials. The white painted metal grille proposed is a high quality product and would provide the means by which to manage the reduction in humidity to reduce the risk of damage to the original timber windows from accumulated condensation. This is considered on balance to cause less than substantial harm at the lower end of the scale upon the historic significance of the property with respect to the elevations.

Impact upon historic significance: Less than substantial harm

4.0 THE PROPOSED WORK AND ITS IMPACT UPON THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd)

4.3.5 Adjustment of internal door locations to Bedrooms 1 and 2

The doors onto Bedrooms 1 and 2 are modern doors within lightweight stud partition walling. It is proposed to minimally adjust the location of these doors to enable built-in storage to be created to the long wall to both bedrooms. This would provide the flat with essential storage and meet the provision in the National Space Standards. The large rooms are of a sufficient scale to enable floor to ceiling storage to be created whilst not impacting the proportions of the room, and no historic fabric would be lost. The proposal will enhance the overall quality of the flat.

Impact upon historic significance: No harm

4.3.6 New internal doors

The 1987 flat refurbishment saw low quality fire doors installed - refer to Image 28. The internal doors are proposed to be replaced with high quality painted timber panelled doors to improve the character of the spaces more appropriate to the period of the property.



Image 41: Proposed 6-panel fire doors

The property has modern internal doors only, of low quality. The proposal seeks to enhance the character of the property and the replacement doors are therefore considered an improvement to its historic significance

Impact upon historic significance: Positive

4.0 THE PROPOSED WORK AND ITS IMPACT UPON THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd)

4.3.7 Replacement storage heaters

The existing storage heaters are proposed to be replaced with 'high heat retention storage heaters'. These would replicate the existing heating solution to the flat, however, the existing storage heaters are at the end of their serviceable life. Their replacement with 'high heat retention' versions would be more energy efficient and offers an improvement to the EPC rating for the flat. This would provide an improved sustainable solution to energy use for the property whilst causing minimal disturbance to the existing historic fabric as the electrical system is already in place.

Impact upon historic significance: No harm

4.3.8 Sash window repair

The central window to the front elevation has deteriorated from exposure to excessive moisture. This has become trapped beneath the modern paint and caused the timber beneath, to both the cill and the bottom rail, to rot - refer to Images 34a-c. It is proposed to replace the cill and bottom rail as they are both in a very poor state of repair and it is not considered appropriate to be able to scarf-in new timber owing to the excessive degree of timber removal necessary. The new timber would then be treated with linseed oil and linseed oil paint to provide a breathable paint finish to mitigate the likelihood of trapped moisture in the future. The repair is necessary to enable to arrest the declining condition of the window, and to enable the remaining portion of the original timber to be retained. The repair shall retain the design and operation of the original window. In the removal of original fabric it is therefore considered the impact upon the historic significance of the property is less than substantial harm at the lower end of the scale.

Impact upon historic significance: Less than substantial harm

4.4 Response to Pre-App comments with regards policy

4.4.1 Policy EN1 - Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings.

Pre-app advice:

"With regards to the proposed layout as a 2-bedroom flat, this would reduce the impacts of the existing inappropriate partitions and therefore would be acceptable in principle. The location of the proposed kitchen and bathroom(s) should be included within the application, along with a clear justification for their siting. As discussed, these should be contained to existing locations, where there are already utility connections, as much as possible and revealing the original dimensions of the main rooms/spaces".

Response: As described in the drawings and the description of the proposed works in paragraphs 4.2 and 4.3 the proposed work has reduced the impact of the inappropriate partitions in direct response to the original historic fabric. The existing utility connections have been re-used, and the length of the rear surface-mounted pipe is proposed to be reduced to minimise its visual impact.

4.0 THE PROPOSED WORK AND ITS IMPACT UPON THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd)

4.4.1 Pre-app advice:

cntd *"There are boarded up fireplaces and modern radiators at the front of the building. As the majority of the works would be contained to the front of the building, this would be an opportunity to reveal these fireplaces."*

The only visible fireplace surround is to the proposed Living/Dining room. As described in drawing 1345-HR-A-TP-0201 this is proposed to be carefully refurnished, with the modern paint removed and redecorated according to what is revealed below. It is proposed to make the fireplace the focal point of the space. The visible surround is suggestive of a Victorian era fireplace and it is proposed to install a fireplace. The remaining two chimney breasts (to proposed Bedrooms 1 and 2) show no evidence of retained fireplaces and it is proposed to retain the chimney breasts as they are. The Ground Floor and Semi-Basement flats have two known fireplaces whose provenance has not been confirmed (refer to Images 35a and b). The fireplaces to the First Floor would have been more modest according to the hierarchy of social spaces of the original house, and as indicated by the remaining fire surround. It is proposed to install a modest fireplace insert, of the style below to reflect those in-situ:



Image 42: Proposed fireplace insert

4.4.2 Policy H7 - prevents the any loss of residential accommodation or land, except in exceptional circumstances.

Pre-app advice:

The supporting text of this policy states "There may be exceptional circumstances where a loss of a limited amount of general residential would help to meet other key identified needs, for instance ... to reinstate a use more appropriate to the significance of a heritage asset, and this should be clearly demonstrated as part of any planning application."

Response: The impact assessment has demonstrated the historic significance of the scale of the rooms and how the removal of the internal partitions would favourably reveal this characteristic of this late Georgian property. The re-use of the property as a single 2-bed flat, compared to the conversion of 3no. studio flats, meets the conditions for 'exceptional circumstances' owing to the significant improvement it would contribute to the historic significance of the property.

4.0 THE PROPOSED WORK AND ITS IMPACT UPON THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd)

4.4.3 **Policy H2** - Density and Mix (within the Submission Draft Local Plan Partial Update, 2025)

Pre-app advice: *It is...likely that a 2-bedroom flat would be considered favourably. And in the Conclusion: a 2-bedroom layout would likely be considered more favourably due to the need for 2+ bedroom dwellings within the central Reading area.*

Response: The proposal would deliver a 2-bedroom flat which aligns with the preferences of the needs identified by the council at the current time. With regards **Policy H5** pertaining to space standards, the flat provides 88m² GIA and the habitable rooms are in excess of the National Space Standards - refer to the areas stated on drawing 1345-HR-A-TP-0201.

4.4.4 **Policy CC8 - Residential amenity**

Pre-app advice:

In creating a new residential unit, whether that be one larger flat or one consolidated 1-bedroom flat at the front, consideration needs to be made for the future occupant's residential amenity... There are no identified risks of harm at this stage, and the applicant should ensure that any future solution should meet the nationally described minimum space standards (Policy H5).

Response: The existing waste collection arrangements shall remain the same.

Policy H5 has been demonstrated to be achieved with the proposed layout for a two-bedroom flat.

4.4.5 **Parking Standards and Design SPD**

Pre-app advice:

As discussed on site, the existing forecourt of the property provides approx. 2-3 parking spaces. Due to the location of the site within Zone 2 Primary Core Area (Parking Standards and Design SPD), a car-free development would be considered acceptable..."

Response: The existing main forecourt provides a parking space for the flat and therefore it does not need to be a car-free development. A covered cycle store is therefore not proposed, and additionally, creation of cycle storage to the front of the property is difficult due to the waste bins and accessibility of the main entrance staircase.

5.0 ACCESS STATEMENT

- 5.1 The existing access to the property shall remain unchanged.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The review of the proposed works and change of use has demonstrated to be either positive, cause 'no harm' or 'less than substantial harm' upon the historic significance of the Grade II listed 109 Castle Hill.
- 6.2 It is considered 'no harm' shall be caused to the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area.
- 6.3 The design has sought to enhance the historic significance of the property and in doing so has implemented the pre-app advice as far as possible to create a high quality living environment in excess of the National Space Standards, yet appropriate to the characterful nature of the property. The implementation of the current building regulations has been challenging to incorporate whilst not causing harm to the historic significance of the property, and it is considered that the minimal changes required to achieve the fire and ventilation standards of modern housing are an appropriate balance to enable the flat to be made available to occupants at the higher standards to meet the needs of current society.
- 6.4
- 6.5 The proposals create an opportunity to improve the energy performance of the accommodation by the installation of high heat retention storage heaters which will reflect lower energy use for the occupants, in line with the national priority of reducing energy use.
- 6.6 It is respectfully requested the planning and listed building consent is granted for the application.

7.0 METHODOLOGY

The following methods were used in gathering the information that informed this Heritage Statement and Impact Assessment:

1) Site visit

109 Castle Hill was visited on the 22.06.2025 and recorded with photographs.

2) On-line research

The Historic Environment Record was consulted to identify relevant information.

3) Design review with the applicant.

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National Library of Scotland	www.maps.nls.uk

