

15 CASTLE STREET

HERITAGE STATEMENT

Date: NOV 2025
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 an application for listed building consent seeking to renovate the frontage and undertake minor internal alterations at 15 Castle Street, Reading. The proposals include the reinstatement of former residential use in the rear part of the building.

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 main alterations are repairs to the frontage 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

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 overhead 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

Consent was given under 24/0061 for a new partition wall at ground floor. Pre-application advice was sought in June 2023 under reference 23/4603. The application included various aspects of work, some of which are included herein; the response commented favourably on the work outlined in this current application. Informal discussions were also held with Historic England before this current application was submitted.

NATURE OF THE PROPOSAL

The application seeks to repair and renovate the front facade using sound conservation principles of breathability and natural materials. This is considered in heritage terms a benefit to the building. It also proposes to reinstate a former residential use, which requires minor internal layout changes to the modern rear spaces of the building. This is considered to do no harm in heritage terms.

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

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 C16 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 and 1980s in a visually matching but historically unsympathetic fashion with non-breathable materials and modern techniques.

RESIDENTIAL USE

15 Castle Street was originally built as a merchant’s house, complete with rooms for living and working. This mix of residential and commercial use has continued through history, with the property most recently being used without any residential purpose. This application seeks to bring back the residential use to the rear part of the building.



LOCATION OF 15 CASTLE STREET



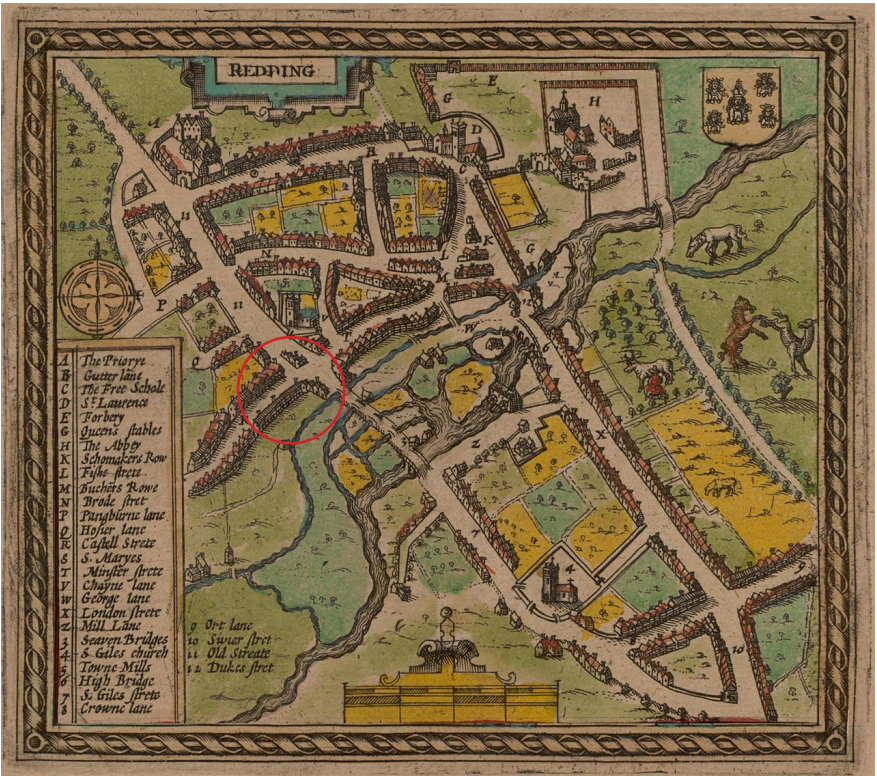
VIEW OF CASTLE STREET WITH NO 15 CENTRAL TO THE IMAGE

04 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

MAP REGRESSION

While this application only affects the external appearance of the property in that it repairs the frontage, 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)

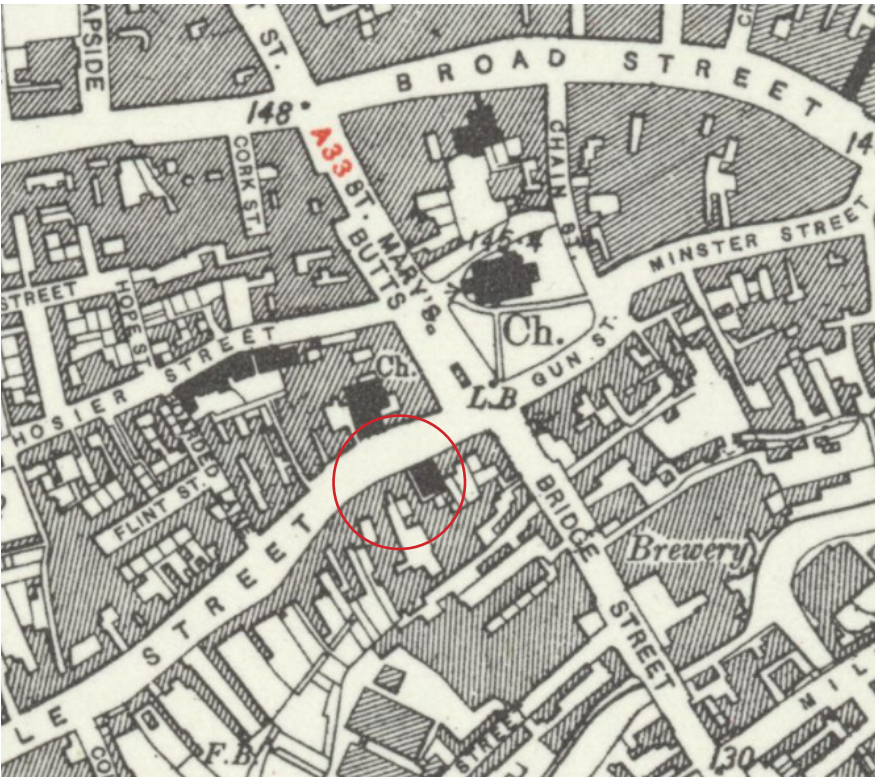
Note minimal change to Castle Street since 1611.



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

FRONT FACADE

The front facade of 15 Castle Street is the street-facing aspect of the building’s C16 principle range which extends over 3 floors and has a partial cellar beneath. It features an impressive Tudor facade with many typical features of that time, such as its jettied construction, bay windows, and double-gabled roof. As such it is a good individual example of historic technologies, and is a record of how people lived 400 years ago. The high quality of the facade also contributes to the built record by showing that this area was historically a well sought-after location for wealthy merchants and businesses. By standing among several other historic assets, these aspects of significance are further enhanced through group value.

On this basis, the front facade has high significance due to its contribution to the street scene, and as a record of historic information.

REAR EXTENSION

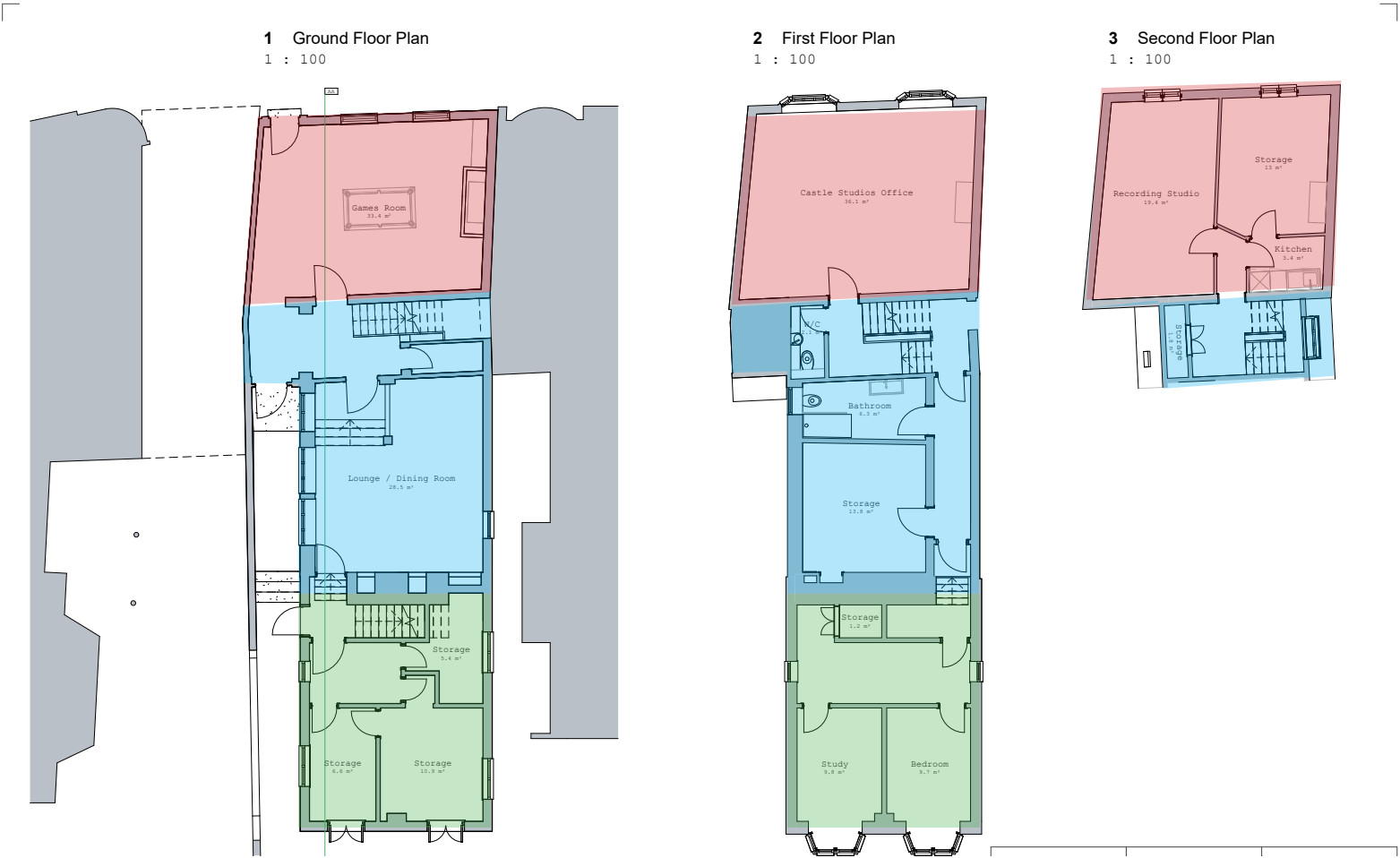
The rear of 15 Castle Street has been altered substantially in the last 100 years. The most rearward part is an extension built in 1982 using modern materials including non-breathable construction, foam insulation, and cement mortar. This extension has not been built with sympathy to the heritage asset, but is otherwise in good condition and not obviously causing any dilapidation. While it does present harm to the heritage asset, there is no immediate need or plan for its removal.

On this basis the rear extension holds no heritage significance.

INTERIOR

Behind the C16 facade are several office rooms with substantial alterations from the 1960s and 1980s, 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.

Broadly speaking it can be understood that the greatest significance (high) is found at the very front of the property, and that this reduces in proportion to how far rearward a space is, until the rear-most part holds the least significance (none).



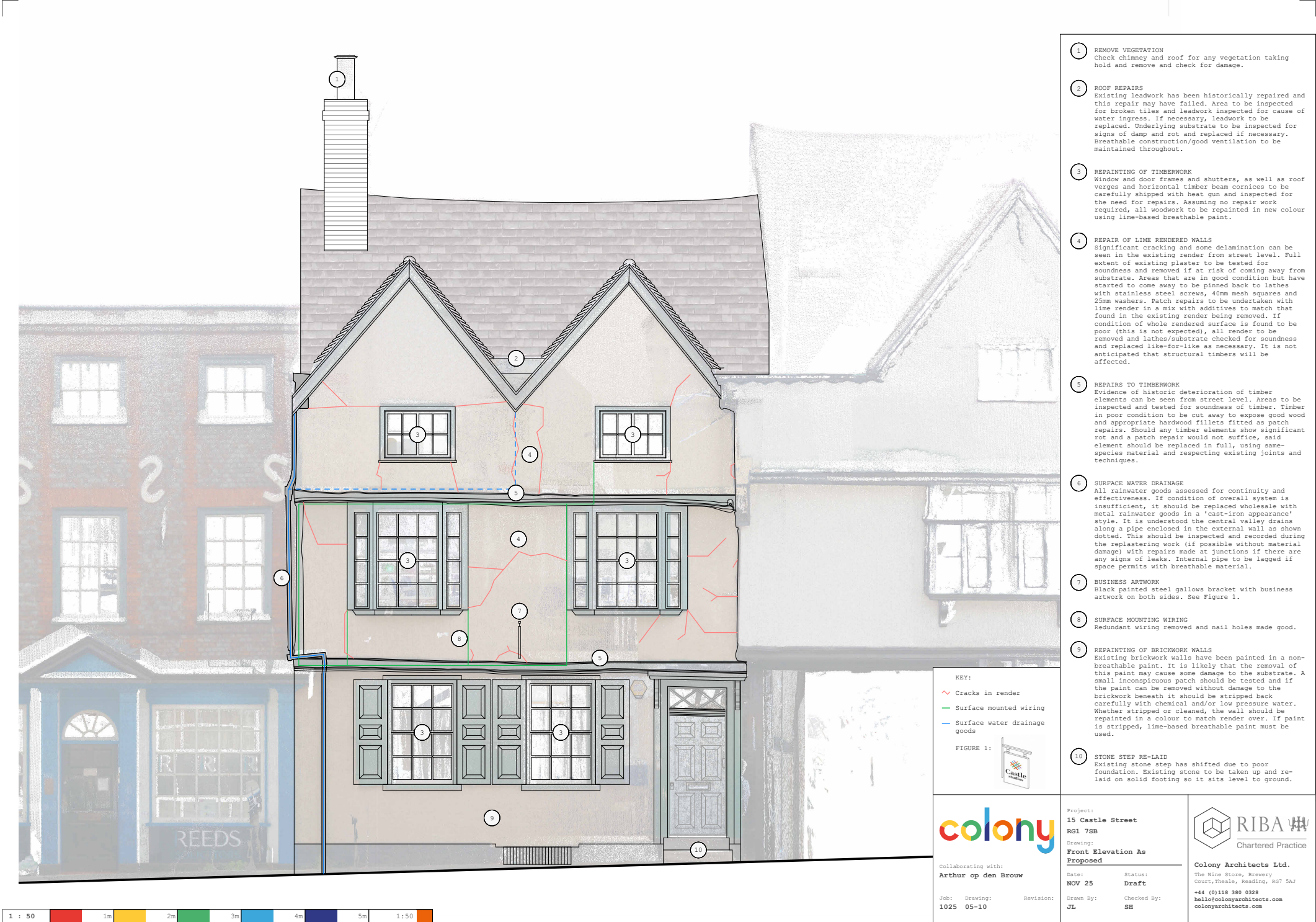
AS EXISTING FLOOR PLANS OF 15 CASTLE STREET SHOWING LEVELS OF SIGNIFICANCE GIVEN TO EACH RANGE WHERE RED IS HIGH SIGNIFICANCE, BLUE IS MODERATE, AND GREEN IS NO SIGNIFICANCE

06 PROPOSALS

FRONT FACADE

The front facade is of high significance, and on this basis must be treated with great care in preserving its value and securing the long-term sustainability of the facade. Historic damage has occurred from water ingress and some repairs may have failed. These proposals seek to repair the facade and reinstate it in sympathetic and technically appropriate ways.

On this basis the repairs to the frontage represent a strong benefit to the heritage asset, in terms of both securing the long term sustainable future of a listed building, and in terms of the building's contribution to the St Marys Conservation Area, and Reading Town Centre's public realm.



PROPOSED FRONT ELEVATION DRAWING SHOWN EXTENTS OF REPAIRS

06 PROPOSALS

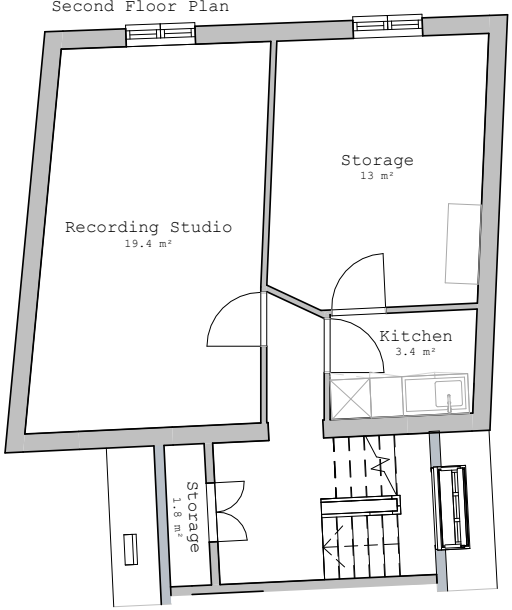
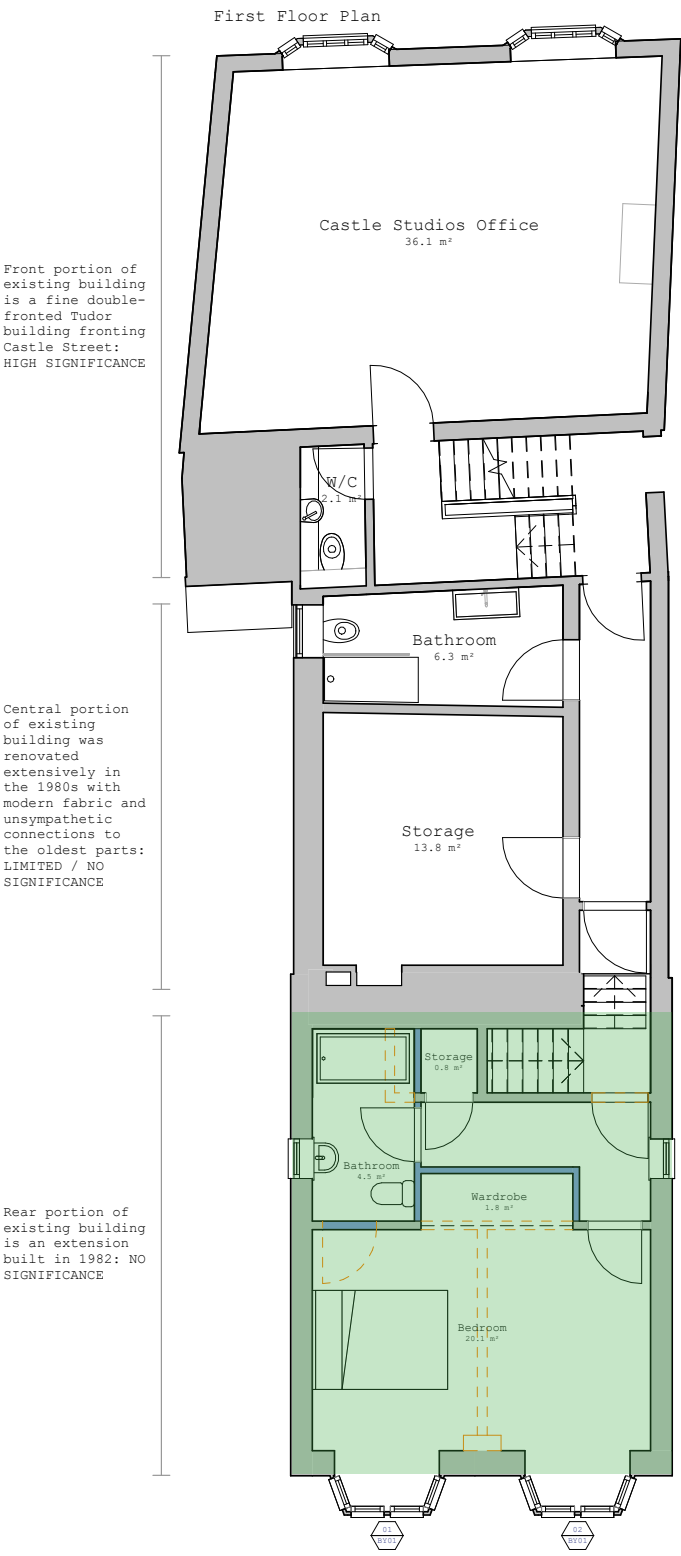
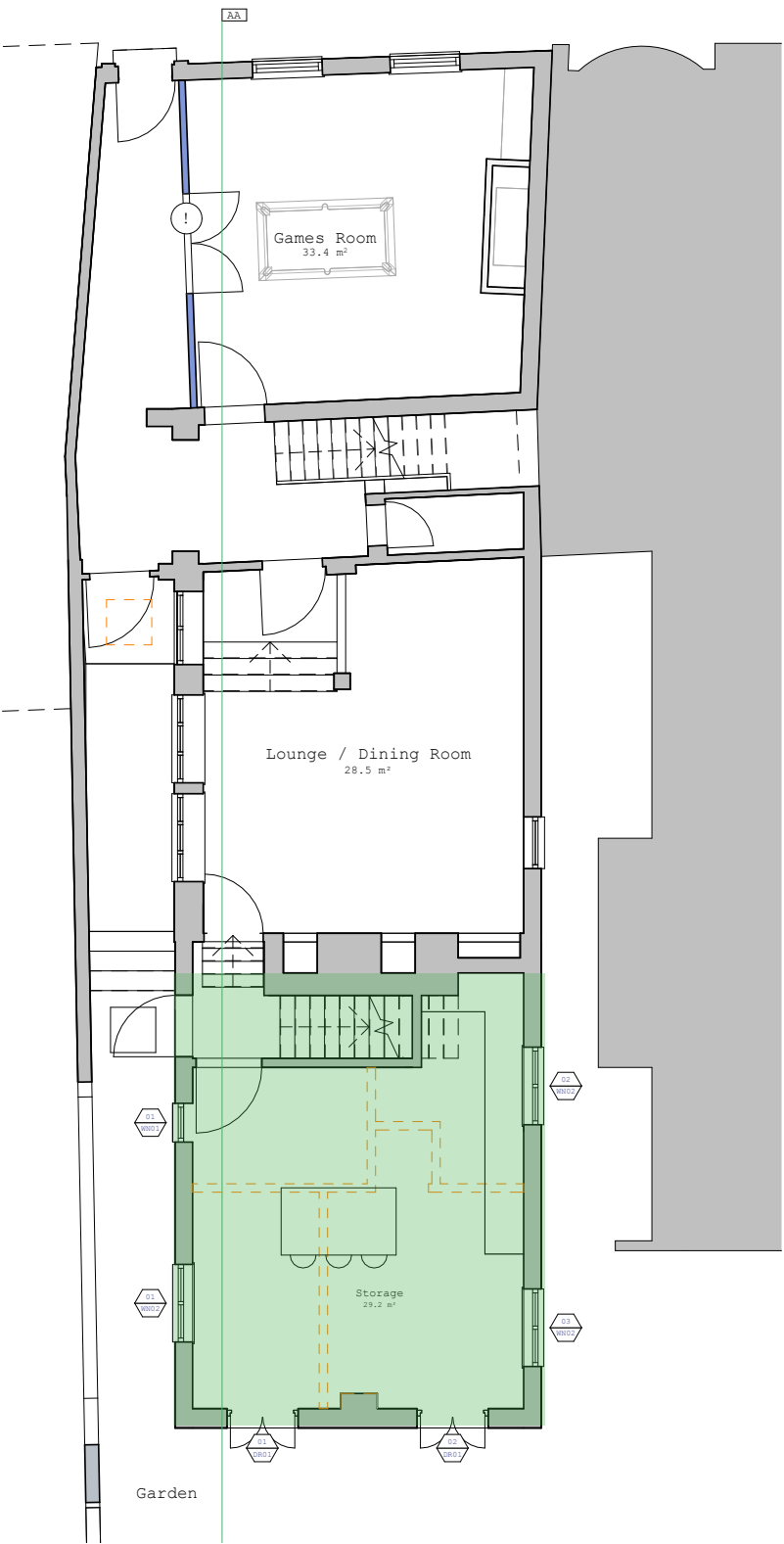
INTERNAL WALL RECONFIGURATION

The existing rear extension offers no heritage significance and so revisions to the internal layout in this part do not adversely impact on the listed building. Further to this, the proposals remove modern subdividing partitions, thus opening existing spaces out into a previously existing configuration. On this basis the alterations are a minor improvement to the listed building.

CHANGE OF USE

The existing use is solely commercial however historic uses have included residential accommodation. This application seeks to change the use from commercial to residential in only the rear part of the building. The subdivision of the spaces to allow a residential unit already exist, and no further subdivision is proposed.

On this basis we consider the change of use to have no impact, or minor benefit, to the heritage asset.



FLOOR PLAN DRAWING SHOWING ADDED WALLS (BLUE) AND REMOVED MODERN WALLS (DOTTED ORANGE) AND THE AREA TO BE CHANGED TO RESIDENTIAL USE (GREEN)



Project:
15 Castle Street
RG1 7SB
Drawing:
Floor Plans As Proposed



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 have the following impacts on the significance:

repairs to frontage	strong benefit
alterations to rear	no impact / less than substantial harm
change of use	no impact / mild benefit

As the proposals offer no harm to the asset, and the repairs to the front facade bring strong benefits, the proposals when considered together bring a benefit to the heritage asset.

On this basis we consider the proposals to be a welcome addition in the long-term sustainable future of 15 Castle Street.