

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Proposed works at:
6 Church Street,
Caversham,
Berkshire,
RG4 8AT

Prepared by
Conservation Architecture
for
Mr & Mrs Rothwell

January 2026

INTRODUCTION

The following Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) has been prepared to assess the impact of the part-retrospective application for the installation of M&E services, installation of a new kitchen and bathroom, construction of a sump and pump behind the front door to remove water after surface water flood events, installation of a raised floor structure over the historic brick sett snug floor and installation of new fixtures, fittings and finishes at 6 Church Street in Caversham. The assessment will first summarise the history and significance of the building. The impact of the proposal will then be assessed and weighted against the significance of the building.

Conservation Architecture was approached by the applicant's Mr & Mrs Rothwell; after appointing a contractor to start repair and refurbishment works to the property. We were asked to develop a set of scheme proposal drawings to reflect the work's agreed to be undertaken between the client and the contractor.

SITE

We analysed the site and report our findings below.

No. 6 is one of two cottages, along with No. 8, that are jointly listed on the National Heritage List for England. The date of construction is thought to be seventeenth century, in keeping with the cluster of other properties locally, including No. 10 which is also listed.

The cottage at No. 6 Church Street adjoins the former Spice Oven to the west, and No. 8, now part of Gardiner's Agency, on the east. Its location in the middle of a cluster of historic vernacular buildings at the very centre of 'old' Caversham and facing Caversham Bridge, is one of the first things travellers see when crossing the bridge into the town from Reading. As such, it forms part of the cherished local scene. In addition to the Grade II listing, No.6 Church Street is also situated in The St Peters Conservation Area.

The exterior comprises of a two and a half storey cottage, with one small room under the eaves of the roof, which has plain clay tiles and a steep pitch. As the roof structure consists of large rafters of some antiquity, there is a pleasing undulation in the roof, both to the front and the rear. The building is painted cream colour which provides a nice contrast with the clay tile roof covering. No. 6 has three windows to both the ground and first floors. These comprise of a mix of two and three light timber frame leaded light windows, which are not 'original' to the building.

STATUTORY DESIGNATIONS

The building is Grade II listed. The list description is reproduced below.

Heritage Category:	Listed Building
Grade:	II
List Entry Number:	1113455
Date first listed:	19-Mar-1975
List Entry Name:	6 AND 8, CHURCH STREET

Location

Statutory Address:	6 AND 8, CHURCH STREET
District:	Reading (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
National Grid Reference:	SU 71186 74785

Details

CHURCH STREET 1. 5128 (North Side) Caversham Nos 6 and 8 SU 7174 11/267 19.3.75. II GV 2. Altered C17 cottage row. 2 storeys. Colourwashed brick and plaster. Small low 2 storey link block with No 4 with 2 light mullion window on 1st floor. Old tile roof with catslide to rear. 3 windows on 1st floor, outer 3 light, centre 2 light. 3 similar windows on ground floor, blocked, and one with shutters. 2 doors. Ground floor openings segmental headed. String at 1st floor level and corbelled brick eaves cornice, original window frames on 1st floor.

Listing NGR: SU7118674785

In addition to being a Grade II listed building, the building falls within the St Peters Conservation Area as designated by Reading Borough Council in April 1988.

A summary of the key characteristics of the Conservation Area, taken from the Conservation Area Appraisal document is provided below. Characteristics which specifically relate to No.6 Church Street are highlighted in *italics*.

The key characteristics are:

- The heavily-wooded ridge above the Thames providing a green backdrop to the CA is crucial in views into it from across the river, particularly from Caversham Bridge and the Thames Promenade. Some of these assets lie outside the area. There are also important views of the river and the bridge from Caversham Court Gardens, and glimpsed views of the river from elsewhere in the CA.
- St Peters Church and its tower, together with Caversham Court, dominate the CA. Caversham Court is included in the Historic England "Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England".

- Tree cover and green spaces, especially around St Peters and in Caversham Court, with specimen trees in the latter, are important. Individual street trees and those in gardens also contribute strongly to the area.
- *The form of the original bridgehead village is still apparent: Bridge Street runs north from the bridge to the T-junction with Church Road (to Oxford) and Church St (to Henley). High traffic volumes attest that this original function endures.*
- *The built form reflects that origin. A core of listed 16th and 17th century village buildings creates a two-storey scale. The irregular building line along the road, often at or close to the back of the footpath, and its winding character leading up to St Peters Hill reflect the historic village.*
- The early village is overlaid with mainly late Victorian and Edwardian buildings, constructed over a short time period. While the commercial buildings raise the predominant scale to three storeys, there is a harmony of scale and materials between these buildings and the earlier ones. Early red brick and timber framed domestic buildings with plain roof tiles combine with well-detailed later brick buildings with slate roofs to form a coherent whole and an attractive and consistent roofscape.
- The use of red brick and flint for boundary walls down St Peters Hill and into Church Road also serves to unify the area.
- This history is reflected in a legacy of Listed Buildings and Buildings of Townscape Interest, whose character is essential to that of the CA as a whole.
- The junction of Church Road and Bridge Street includes some distinguished banks and similar commercial premises. The importance of Bridge Street as the visual corridor linking the village core with the bridge outweighs the poor treatment of some of its buildings, which nevertheless have a consistent scale and style.
- The CA breaks down into four sub-areas of distinctive character, which provide a context for making decisions on change.
- Several gap sites detract from the CA. Their redevelopment would be welcome but will need particular care.
- Improvement of surfaces and rationalisation of street furniture would be of great benefit, as resources permit
- The CA's character is at risk through the gradual but cumulative loss of the details which help define it, including built details (Section 7.1) and the treatment of the riverbank.

DESCRIPTION OF THE WORKS & IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE WORKS

The following section is intended to assess the impact of the proposed works to No. 6 Church Street. This assessment is based on the observations made on site and a review of the proposals. The impact will be assessed against the following criteria.

Scale of affect	Definition
Beneficial	The alterations enhance the heritage asset of the ability to appreciate its significant values.
Low Beneficial	The alterations enhance to a minor extent the heritage asset of the ability to appreciate its significant values.
Neutral	The alterations do not affect the heritage asset of the ability to appreciate its significant values.
Low Adverse	The alterations harm to a minor extent the heritage asset of the ability to appreciate its significant values.
Adverse	The alterations harm the heritage asset of the ability to appreciate its significant values.

The description and assessment of the impact of the proposed works.

Beneficial	Entrance Lobby The existing suspended timber floor structure has already been removed (retrospective). A new suspended timber floor is to be installed, with a 20mm engineered oak floor finish, over a proposed new sump and pump to remove surface water after flood events. The client and the adjoining property owners have been having discussions with Reading Borough Council's Highways Department to agree on a drainage solution to stop this occurring. As no agreement on a solution to overcome the problem of surface water running straight into the building from the public highway has been reached, our client is proposing the installation of the sump to allow the quick removal of water building up under the floor void and causing flooding within the Entrance. As such, this solution necessitated the removal of the existing floor structure, which had rotted due to moisture being retained in the structure after surface water flood events. The existing gypsum plaster finish to the walls has already been removed (retrospective). The walls are to be replastered in lime which is to receive a breathable paint finish. This will allow the walls, which are saturated at low-level, to dry out over time. This will reduce the risk of degradation to the external brickwork through freeze-thaw action.
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	The existing painted Artex finish on plasterboard, which is fixed under the floorboards and between the joists, is to receive a gypsum plaster skim overcoat and a painted finish to improve the aesthetics.
Low Beneficial	Sitting Room A new 20mm engineered oak floor finish is to be provided over the existing 100mm concrete slab which lays over the historic brick setts. The new engineered oak will provide a traditional and durable finish for the new occupants. The gypsum plaster finish has been removed to the left-hand side wall (retrospective) and is to be replastered in lime which is to receive a breathable paint finish allowing the structure to breathe. The existing brickwork, where the existing gypsum plaster finish has been removed to the right-hand side wall (retrospective), is to be brush cleaned and repointed in a lime mortar allowing it to breathe. It is to be left exposed as a 'feature' wall. The front wall is to be lined in timber studwork with a plasterboard and gypsum skim coat over and a painted finish. The void between the studs and plasterboard is to be ventilated via airbricks, already installed (retrospective) to aid drying after water penetrates the brickwork during surface water flood events. The existing ceiling comprises of a painted Artex finish on plasterboard, which is fixed under the floorboards and between the joists, this is to be retained. 50mm of Isover Acoustic Partition Roll Insulation (APR 1200) is to be friction fitted between the joists. New Gyproc plasterboard is to be fitted between the joists and below the acoustic insulation which is to receive a gypsum plaster skim coat and painted finish. The will leave the exposed ends of the joists/ structure visible whilst delivering an improvement to the acoustic separation of the ground and first floor accommodation.
Low Beneficial	Snug A new suspended timber floor is to be installed, with a 20mm engineered oak floor finish, over the existing historic brick setts. The brick setts in this part of the building are set lower than in the Sitting Room and suffer from dampness with the high water table particularly after heavy rainfall and surface water flooding. The proposed suspended timber floor will retain the historic floor finish, allowing its exposure in future if a surface water drainage strategy can be agreed with Reading Borough Council.

	The painted Artex finish to the side and rear walls is to receive a new gypsum plaster skim overcoat with a painted finish. This maintains the status quo, as such, it will not allow the structure to breathe again nor make the situation any worse. The front wall is to be lined in timber studwork with a plasterboard and gypsum skim coat over and a painted finish. The void between the studs and plasterboard is to be ventilated via airbricks, already installed (retrospective) to aid drying after water penetrates the brickwork during surface water flood events. The existing painted Artex finish on plasterboard, which is fixed under the joists, is to receive a gypsum plaster skim overcoat and a painted finish to improve the aesthetics.
Low Beneficial	Kitchen A new 20mm engineered oak floor finish is to be provided over the existing 100mm concrete floor slab. The new engineered oak will provide a traditional and durable finish for the new occupants. The existing painted gypsum plaster finish to the walls is to be repainted and a new 200mm high tiled splashback provided above the hob, sink and worktops. This maintains the status quo, as such, it will not allow the structure to breathe again nor make the situation any worse. The existing plasterboard ceiling with a painted smooth gypsum plaster skim coat is to be repainted to improve the aesthetics. The existing Kitchen joinery, fixtures and fittings have been removed. New Kitchen joinery, fixtures and fittings are to be installed, as indicated on drawing no. 25-005-20, connecting up to the existing hot & cold water feeds, and foul water drainage, as such, no new holes are required to be drilled through the existing structure to allow the installation of mechanical services. A new drain pipe from the new sump pump is to be run in the existing cold water supply service trench from the Entrance Hall into the Kitchen. A new 25Ø hole is to be core drilled through the external rear wall in the Kitchen to allow it to drain into the existing back inlet gully. Whilst this necessitates a minimal loss of fabric, it is deemed to be necessary to allow the removal of surface water after flood events, without which, retained moisture will lead to continued long-term sustained degradation to the front of the building.

Low Beneficial	Bedroom The existing carpet finish has been removed. The existing elm floorboards are to be sanded, oiled and left exposed. This will improve the legibility of the existing structure and finishes. The painted Artex finish to the walls is to receive a new gypsum plaster skim overcoat with a painted finish. This maintains the status quo, as such, it will not allow the structure to breathe again nor make the situation any worse. The existing painted Artex finish on plasterboard, which is fixed under the joists, is to receive a gypsum plaster skim overcoat and a painted finish to improve the aesthetics.
Beneficial	Dressing Room The existing carpet finish and chipboard floor has been removed (retrospective). New oak floor boards are to be fixed over the existing floor joists and sanded, oiled and left exposed. The will provide an aesthetically pleasing traditional floor finish. The lime plaster finish is to be retained, with making good in lime plaster feathered in to match the existing where required. The lime plaster is to receive a new breathable paint finish. The rear wall where the failing plaster has already been removed (retrospective) is to be brush cleaned and re-pointed in a lime mortar and left as an exposed 'feature' wall. The existing lime plaster finish below the rafters has been replaced/ made good with a new breathable decorative paint finish (retrospective).
Low Beneficial	Bathroom The existing carpet finish has been removed. The existing elm floorboards are to be sanded, oiled and left exposed. This will improve the legibility of the existing structure and finishes. The existing late C20 stud partition wall on which the toilet was mounted has been removed (retrospective). The plasterboard has been removed to the internal stud partition walls (retrospective). A new Gyproc plasterboard with a gypsum skim coat and painted finish is to be installed on the existing studwork forming the rear wall abutting the catslide roof space and into the dormer. New Wedi

	backerboard is to be installed on the existing studwork forming the partition walls to the Bedroom and Landing which is to be fully tiled. The existing part brick/ block party wall with Artex finish is to receive a gypsum plaster skim overcoat with painted finish. Where the existing plasterboard has been removed from the historic studs forming the original rear wall of the property into the catslide roof space. New fixed and removable shelving is to be installed between to allow access into the roof space to service the boiler. The exposure of the existing structure has improved the legibility of the existing structure and plan form of the property. The existing painted Artex finish on plasterboard, which is fixed under the floorboards and between the joists, is to receive a gypsum plaster skim overcoat and a painted finish to improve the aesthetics. The existing Bathroom fittings have been removed (retrospective). New fittings comprising of a basin, WC, shower tray and glass cubicle partition are to be installed. The new fittings will utilise the existing hot & cold water feeds and foul water drainage connection. The new drainage from the fittings to the existing SVP will be surface mounted and easily removable/ reversible in future. The drainage will be concealed in a timber boxing to obscure it from view. As such no irreparable damage will be caused by the installation of the replacement fittings. A new gas fired condensing boiler has been installed in the location of the original. It is connected into the existing copper flow/ return, gas and water supply pipes. A new tile vent has been installed to discharge exhaust gases and water vapour from the boiler flue.
	Attic The existing carpet finish has been removed. The existing elm floorboards are to be sanded, oiled and left exposed. This will improve the legibility of the existing structure and finishes. The existing party wall is formed of a part brick/ block construction. The existing defective brick has been replaced with new blockwork to the right-hand side of the fireplace where there was no wall structure and as such fire protection between Nos. 6 & 8 (retrospective). Both the existing brick and blockwork is to receive a new gypsum plaster skim coat with painted finish. The existing low-level partition walls/ scaled ceilings have had their existing plasterboard removed. New Gyproc plasterboard with a gypsum plaster skim coat and painted finish is to be installed on the

	existing studs and under the existing rafters. As such, this will have little impact on the appearance or character of the Attic Room.
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CONCLUSION

The proposed works are specified to refurbish the building and bring it back into residential usage. The installation of new Bathroom and Kitchen fixtures and fittings will utilise the existing water feeds and drainage connections, ensuring there is no impact on the existing fabric through the installation of new mechanical services.

The proposed new/ replacement finishes will allow the existing historic structure to breathe in some areas, whilst not affecting the breathability elsewhere.

The biggest proposed changes comprise of the installation of the new sump and pump in the Entrance Hall, to remove surface water after flood events, and the new suspended floor structure over. This combined with the new lime plaster finish to the walls will allow the structure to breathe and dry out once more.

Similarly, the lining of the front walls in the Sitting Room and Snug with a ventilated void behind the new surface finish will provide a dry internal surface for the occupants and allow the external wall structure behind to dry out.

In both these instances the drying of the structure will help to reduce the long-term risk of degradation of the fabric through freeze-thaw action.

The new suspended floor structure over the existing brick setts in the Snug will provide a new fit-for-purpose floor finish for the occupants, whilst retaining the historic finish below. This approach will allow the existing floor finish to be uncovered in future, if suitable drainage provision is put in place to eliminate the surface water flooding issues which mean at present the floor structure is damp and not fit-for-purpose.

The proposed works affect No.6 Church Street internally only, as such, the proposals will have no impact on the character or appearance of the St Peters Conservation Area. We deem the proposals to be a pragmatic solution to bring the building back into residential occupation, thus ensuring its long-term sustainable future use. We therefore call on the Local Authority to support this application.