



## **DESIGN AND HERITAGE STATEMENT**

St Mary's Church, Castle St, Reading RG1 7RD

Prepared for: St Marys Church Trustees

*The purpose of this report is to accompany a Listed Building application. A heritage statement sets out the details of the history and development of the asset using photographic, map, archival and fabric evidence. It includes an assessment of the evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value of the heritage asset and the impact of the proposed works upon that significance. In addition to desk based research a site visit was carried out as part of this assessment and a non intrusive survey took place.*

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St Mary's Church, Castle St, Reading RG1 7RD

## **PROJECT OVERVIEW**

### **Heritage Asset and its Setting:**

Project Address: St Mary's Church, Castle St, Reading RG1 7RD

Local Authority: Reading Borough Council

Conservation Area: St Mary's Butts/Castle Street

Building Use: Non-residential institution (Class D1)

Listing Status: Grade II\*      List entry no. 1113427

#### Designated Heritage Asset:

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Scheduled Monument?        | N |
| Listed Building?           | Y |
| Registered Park and Garden | N |
| Historic Battlefield       | N |
| Conservation Area          | Y |
| World Heritage Site        | N |

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Non Designated Heritage Asset | N |
|-------------------------------|---|

### **Project Overview:**

Main church Nave roof structural repair, ornate plaster ceiling repair and redecoration. No external works. No extension.



*Photo 1 – View of the front of St Mary's Church*

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*Photo 2 and 3 Failed Beam over Church Nave*

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*Photo 3 Area of redecoration needed looking towards failed beam*



*Photo 4 Looking towards failed beam from north end of church*

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*Photo 5 and 6 Repair area needed following a rwp leak*

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*Photo 7 Location of plaster repair needed following rwp leak.*

### **Reason for the project:**

There are large areas of cracking in the existing ceiling over the main church Nave on the southern end. The likely cause is delamination of the plaster from the timber laths following a historic roof leak. Please note the roof leak has been repaired and the cause of the issue understood to have been resolved. There is also a significant fracture in a timber valley beam where the timber beam supports a post from the main roof above.

The interior area and roof space was inspected jointly by a structural engineer, historic plaster repair specialist and heritage consultant and options for repair considered taking into consideration the practicality of the repair and the preservation of historic fabric using sympathetic materials. This application is a result of this joint discussion.

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## Drawings and Documents provided

-  2085 E01 Location and Site Plan
-  2085 E02 Existing Plans Illustrating Location of Works
-  2085 P01 Proposed Plan
-  251210 St Marys Castle Street Reading CHA Engineers report
-  St Mary church Method Statement for Lath and Plaster Ceiling Repair
-  St Mary's church Method Statement for Ornamental Cornice Repair

## Schedule of Intervention:

In order to achieve the works, the following alterations/ interventions will be required:

- Structural Repair as per engineers report.
- Lath and plaster ceiling and ornate cornice repair as per method statement submitted.
- Like for like redecoration of existing ceiling retaining the existing colours.

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## Setting Overview/ Context:

The project relates internal works only to the ceiling over the Church Nave of St Marys Church (14 Castle Street). The site sits on Castle Street at the centre of Reading Town centre and is Grade II\* Listed. The property sits within the St Marys Butts, Castle Street Conservation Area lying northwest of the Oracle Shopping Centre with the site on the north side of Castle Street close to the cross roads with Bridge Street.

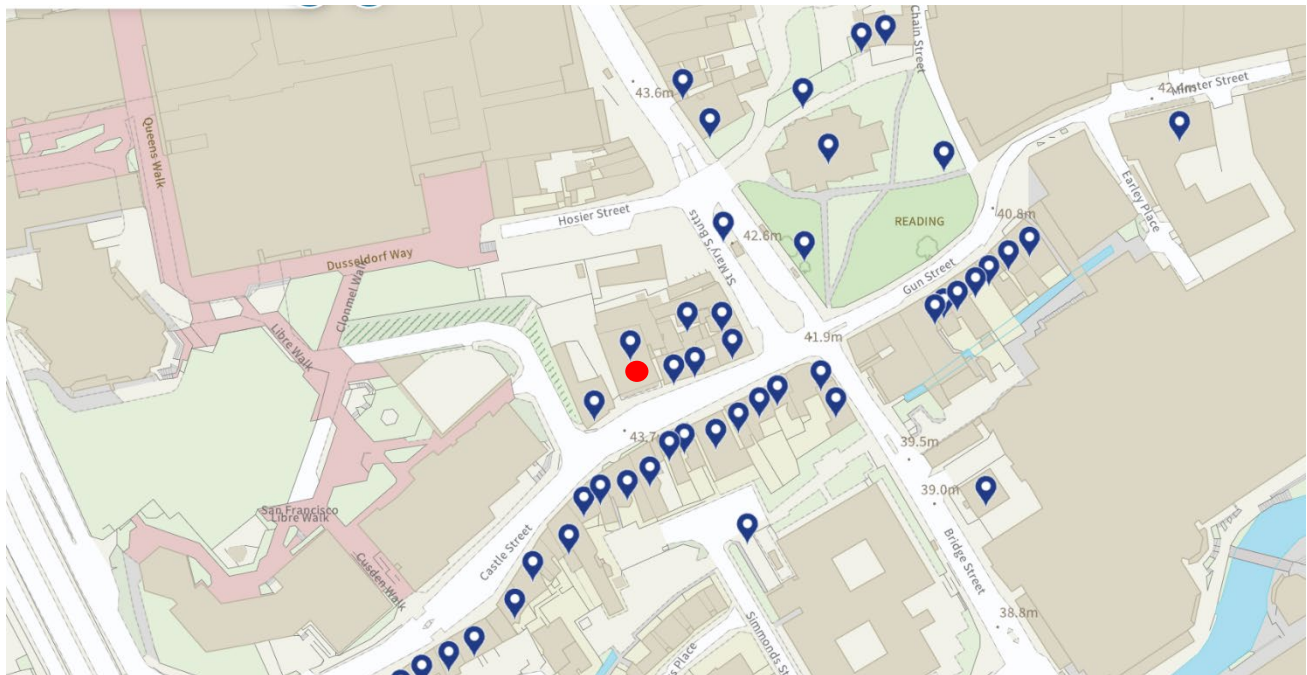
The church itself is a dominant and distinctive feature within the Conservation Area consisting of a giant hexastyle order of fluted columns with Corinthian capitals, under a triangular pediment. The single storey side and two storey rear halls are of a plainer architectural language with red brick walls and a slate roof.

As described in an extract from the Conservation Area appraisal: 'Essentially the Conservation Area lies at the crossing of two north/south and east/west roads. Except for St Mary's Church and Churchyard, which form a key open space and landmark building in the north-east segment of the cross-roads, the character of the area is one of two and three storey buildings built right up the back edge of pavements'.

The ceiling over the Church Nave is a plain lath and plaster ceiling with ornate cornice detailing to the perimeter and valley beams. It is in a poor state of repair and has a number of significant cracks including one of the valley beams.

The church is Church of England Continuing (CofEC) property, a group of Anglican congregations outside the Church of England and therefore does not carry the ecclesiastical exemption from Listed Building Consent triggering the need for an application with the local authority.

Setting: Urban Area



Map taken from Historic England Listing Database. Property shown with a red dot.

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### **Impacted Heritage Assets:**

The building sits within the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area. It also sits within the High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ).

The building is Listed.

Official list entry

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II\*

List Entry Number: 1113427

Date first listed: 22-Mar-1957

Date of most recent amendment: 13-Jun-2022

List Entry Name: Church of St Mary

Statutory Address 1: 14 Castle Street, Reading, RG17RD

Location

Statutory Address: 14 Castle Street, Reading, RG17RD

District: Reading (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

National Grid Reference: SU7133273254

Summary

Evangelist chapel of 1798 by R Billing, with embellishment and extension by N Briant around 1840 and further alterations in the late C19 and mid- to late C20.

Reasons for Designation

The Church of St Mary, an Evangelist chapel of 1798 by R Billing, with embellishment and extension by N Briant around 1840 and further alterations in the late C19 and mid- to late C20, is listed for the following principal reasons: Architectural interest:

\* the church's principal frontage is distinctive, consisting of a giant hexastyle order of fluted columns with Corinthian capitals, under a triangular pediment; \* good survival of a late-C18 and C19 chapel interior, including the gallery supported on columns, and fixtures and fittings such as the late-C18 box pews in addition to the curved matching pulpit and reading desk; \* for the survival of the extensive Sunday school with its viewing panels to the chancel; \* both phases of design (the original chapel of 1798 by R Billing and the embellishment of 1840 by N Briant) are by notable architects.

Historic interest:

\* the church plan and interior fittings are illustrative of non-conformist worship throughout England in the late C18 and early C19.

Group value:

\* the church is of considerable importance to Castle Street which has many other listed buildings, including the Grade II\*-listed, number 15 (National Heritage List for England entry 1303734) which stands opposite.

History

The first written record of Reading dates from the C9 when the name seems to have referred to a tribe, called Reada's people. The town lies at the junction of the rivers Thames and Kennet and it is possible that there was a river port here during the Roman occupation. The town was recorded as a royal village by 870 and by 1086 there was a thriving urban community, as recorded in the Domesday Book. Reading Abbey was founded in 1121 and this transformed Reading into a place of pilgrimage as well as an important trading and ecclesiastical centre with one of the biggest and richest monasteries in England. By 1525 Reading was the largest town in Berkshire and the tenth-largest in England when measured in taxable wealth, largely due to the wool and cloth trades.

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The dissolution led to the monastic complex becoming a royal palace and by 1611 the town's population had grown to over 5,000. A number of the timber-framed houses from this period survive in Castle Street and Market Place. The civil war caused the building of earthwork defences surrounding the town and it was besieged.

During the C18 Reading became a prosperous market town and administrative centre, due to the development of the town's waterways and road links. In 1723 the River Kennet was transformed into a canal, linking Reading to Newbury, further extended by the opening of the Kennet and Avon Canal in 1810, to create a route between Reading and the Bristol Channel. Turnpike roads were also improved, establishing major coaching routes from London to Oxford, the West Country and the southern coast. Iron works, brewing and malting caused the expansion of the town further west and in the historic centre of Reading, many older, timber-framed buildings were refaced in fashionable brick. A new town hall was built just northeast of the west end of Friar Street in 1786.

In the C19 the town expanded further; three separate railway companies ran routes through the town to London, causing a rapid increase in population (9,400 in 1801 to 21,500 in 1851 and over 70,000 by 1900) as well as the development of Reading's famous Three B's industries: beer (H & G Simonds Brewery, later Courage, 1785-2010), bulbs (Suttons Seeds, 1806-1976) and biscuits (Huntley and Palmers, 1822-1976), although all three have now moved from Reading centre. Growth during this period was characterised by the proliferation of brick terraces, and Hardy referred to Reading as 'Aldbrickham' in his novel *Jude the Obscure*. The excellent local clay had been used for tile making from medieval times and then bricks after the C18. In 1869 the town was confirmed as the county town for Berkshire and the extent of the borough was increased to the south in 1887 and again in 1911 to the north and west.

The University was founded as an extension college of the University of Oxford and received its charter in 1926. The town centre was considerably changed between 1969 and the 1980s with the development of the Inner Distribution Road and also the opening of the M4 in 1971. In 2022, Reading is one of the largest urban areas in the UK without city status. Information technology and the service economy now dominate commercial activity and the newly built development of the town.

Ecclesiastically, the C18 saw the birth of the Methodist and Evangelical movements. When the minister of the Church of St Giles on Southampton Street, Reading, was succeeded by a rationalist minister in 1797, the Evangelical members of the congregation including R Billing, Dr Thomas Ring and Peter William French, left to establish another church. They raised £2,000 to buy the site of the old country gaol in Castle Street and R Billing (1747-1826) designed a chapel, which was completed in 1798. It was fitted out with box pews over two storeys and designed to seat a congregation of around 1,000.

In 1836, the congregation was reconciled with the Church of England, which may have prompted the enlargement of the chapel around 1840. The principal frontage was embellished with a giant hexastyle order of fluted columns with Corinthian capitals, under a triangular pediment and secured from the pavement by decorative railings (since removed). The capitals are probably of Coade stone, a patented artificial stone invented around 1769. A bell tower in the Greek revival style was added to the apex of the roof, which is thought to have been inspired by the Tower of Winds in Athens (an ancient timepiece that is also considered to be the world's first weather station). The chapel was extended to the rear by the construction of a chancel and two-storey Sunday school.

Internally, a timber pulpit and reading desk were fitted, perhaps replacing a three-decker pulpit. A relocated organ was installed to the side of the chancel. The 1840 work was carried out to the design of Nathaniel Briant of the local architectural and building practice, H & N Briant. The practice was also responsible for the King Street Bank (NHLE entry 1113497, listed at Grade II) and the main block of the Royal Berkshire Hospital (NHLE entry 1156091, listed at Grade II\*). In 1882 further improvements were carried out which included encaustic pavement laid in the aisles and chancel by Messrs Strong, Sumner and Lewis under the direction of the architects Messrs Webb and Tubbs. Around 1956, the bell tower was reduced for safety reasons and a detached episcopal school to the rear of the church was demolished. In the later C20, toilets were inserted to the east side, foreshortening one of the school rooms. In the 1970s a small number of box pews were removed from the rear of the church when a dais was installed.

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In 1994 and prompted by changing General Synod policy, the congregation left the Church of England and aligned with the Continuing Church of England, whose worship is based on the 1662 Book of Common Prayer.

#### Details

Evangelist chapel of 1798 by R Billing, with embellishment and extension by N Briant around 1840 and further alterations in the late C19 and mid- to late C20.

**MATERIALS:** stucco walls scored to simulate ashlar, with stone and artificial stone dressings including probable Coade stone capitals, under a slate roof.

**PLAN:** the church orientation is described as a compass. It comprises an entrance hall with dual end stairs to a gallery, a large nave and a chancel to the north end, with a vestry to the west side and Sunday school rooms to the east.

**EXTERIOR:** the symmetrical front elevation is dominated by a giant hexastyle portico of Greek Corinthian order under a triangular pediment, both of 1840. The portico is formed of six, fluted columns with Corinthian capitals (probably of Coade stone) and is accessed by three stone steps from the street level. Above the portico, the cornice and tympanum have a dentil moulding. A shortened and simplified, stone bell tower straddles the apex of the roof, taking the form of a giant pedestal with rebated corners and a moulded cornice. The front wall of the church has three giant door openings, with that at the centre being taller. Each has a moulded architrave and a pair of timber panelled doors with wrought-iron drop handles and a geometric pattern of circular, iron mouldings.

The west side elevation is of six bays and has metal, eight pane, round-headed windows, five of which are full height with the that towards the front of the church being smaller. The wall has a stucco render, including to the moulded soffit. The east side is similar in design but largely obscured by adjacent buildings. It has a panelled gate which leads to a passageway. Towards the rear, there is a panelled entrance door with rectangular fanlight, surmounted by a triangular pediment. At the rear of the building, the end gable of the school is visible. It has a single C20 window and is faced with brown brick in a header bond (probably a later repair).

The rear elevation is constructed of red brick laid in a Dutch bond. There is a chancel to the centre, a vestry to the right and a two-storey former Sunday school, to the left. The chancel has three, tall, round-headed windows, with that at the centre being taller. The gable end above has a plain bargeboard. The single-storey vestry has a plain, C20 door under a timber porch, supported on carved brackets. The single sash window is recessed under a segmental brick arch and is six over six with margin lights. The two-storey, four-bay rear elevation of the school has regular, rebated sash windows to both floors, under segmental brick arches. The windows to the ground floor are one over one and four over four to the first floor, apart from at the far-right which is also one over one. To the left side, there is a small, C20 lean-to extension.

**INTERIOR:** at the front of the building there is a wide narthex with a geometric tiled floor. This is located between the later portico and the original front wall of the chapel, which retains its stone quoins. At the centre, there is an entrance to the nave, which has a moulded architrave and a set of panelled timber doors. To either end of the entrance hall, there are dog-leg stairs with plain spindles and curved, moulded handrails, which rise to the gallery.

The interior of the nave largely dates from 1798. It is rectangular and laid out with timber box pews of raised and fielded panelling, either side of a mid-C19, geometric, coloured tile floor. The box pews are numbered with plaques and many carry informal carvings with the name of their owners and the date 1798 or 1799. Doric columns painted to resemble marble (scagliola), rise to support a gallery to three sides, faced with moulded panels, fronting raked, box pews. The columns appear to continue through the gallery, transitioning to an Ionic form. They terminate under longitudinal beams which connect to a cornice around the walls, all of which is decorated with a modillion moulding. The nave has three, curved ceilings, with the central being higher and lit by two, late-C18 cast-iron chandeliers, under ceiling sconces. An unused sconce is fixed to the pitched ceiling of the chancel.

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The small chancel is located at the north end under a round-headed arch, which is decorated with the painted letters 'TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY'. Under the entrance, there is a mid-C19, barrel-shaped pulpit, of polished wood, which stands on a short column with carved console brackets. It has decorative panel mouldings, fluted columns, a dentil course and brass fittings. To the rear, there is an access stair, which has a curving moulded handrail and decorative, wrought iron spindles. The adjacent reading desk is similar in design, but the barrel body is attached directly to the floor. The chancel arch has round-headed timber plaques to either side, carrying the Ten Commandments. The windows to the rear of the chancel have multiple panes of coloured glass and to the centre, a stained-glass garland with text commemorating Caroline Young dated 1902. Above the chancel windows are the painted letters 'TILL HE COME'. The organ is set into the western side of the chancel and its pipes are also revealed to the west gallery, within a round-headed arch. At first floor level to the east side of the chancel, there are three sets of sliding screens which allow a view of the chancel and congregation from the first-floor schoolroom. The chancel has timber pews and a timber, moulded communion rail with wrought-iron spindles. The communion table and reredos (added in 1930) are constructed of timber and have decorative moulded panels of Gothic character.

A door to the east side connects the nave to the Sunday school rooms which predominantly have four or six-panel, solid timber doors. The entrance hallway has a decorative cast-iron ventilation grille to the church side. The foreshortened schoolroom to the front of the building has a small, brick fireplace and a number of panelled, fitted cupboards. At ceiling level, it has a modillion cornice under exposed rafters. At the rear, the ground-floor school room has a spine beam supported by a cast-iron column. It is fitted out with panelled cupboards and has a 'Tortoise Stove' to the rear, supplied by the Reading ironmongers. There is a door out to a C20, rear extension, which has functional fixtures and fittings. A plain, dog-leg stair rises from the eastern side of the rear schoolroom up to the first-floor schoolroom, which has exposed A-frames to the ceiling and is otherwise plain and functional.

#### Legacy

Legacy System number: 38821

Legacy System: LBS

#### Sources

##### Books and journals

Biographical Dictionary of Architects at Reading, (1999), .

##### Websites

Reading Museum website, accessed 21/11/2021 from <https://www.readingmuseum.org.uk/blog/castle-street-st-marys-butts-short-walk-through-time-part-two>

St Mary's Castle Street History Leaflet, accessed 8/2/22 from <https://www.stmaryscastlestreet.org.uk/history.htm>

The building is within the context of several Listed Buildings.[JY1.1]

#### Official list entry

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1321964

Date first listed: 22-Mar-1957

List Entry Name: SUN INN

Statutory Address 1: SUN INN, 14 AND 16, CASTLE STREET

#### Location

Statutory Address: SUN INN, 14 AND 16, CASTLE STREET

District: Reading (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

Job number: 2085

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National Grid Reference: SU 71318 73232

#### Details

CASTLE STREET 1. 5128 (North Side) Nos 14 and 16 (Sun Inn) SU 7173 SW 2/71 22.3.57. II GV 2. C17 and older foundations and cellars, altered and modernized. 2 storeys and attic. Stucco over timber-framing. Tiled roof. A picturesque inn with half hipped gable to right of centre. 5 glazing bar sashes on 1st floor (2 in gable which has one small attic window). Ground floor has modern square bay window to left with balustraded balcony over; architrave surround and flat hood to plank door with wreath knocker, one 3-light window in gable and small door and 1 window to right (No 14). Two 2 storey extensions to rear. Interior: a considerable amount of exposed timber-framing. A small stone arch in yard called "Norman Arch" and cellars reputed to be remains of Reading Old Gaol.

Listing NGR: SU7133573244

#### Legacy

Legacy System number: 38822

Legacy System: LBS

#### Official list entry

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1154727

Date first listed: 14-Dec-1978

List Entry Name: 10 AND 12, CASTLE STREET

Statutory Address 1: 10 AND 12, CASTLE STREET

#### Location

Statutory Address: 10 AND 12, CASTLE STREET

District: Reading (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

National Grid Reference: SU 71350 73246

#### Details

CASTLE STREET 1. 5128 (North Side) Nos 10 and 12 SU 7173 SW 2/73 II GV 2. Circa 1800. 3 storeys and attic. Red brick with brick flat arches and 1st floor cill band. No 10 retains dentil brick cornice. Parapet to both. Slight mansard to slate roof. Glazing bar sash windows in 3 ranges (including dormers). Outer 1st and 2nd floor windows tripartite. 2 modern shop fronts on ground floor and central round headed doorway with radiating and wreathed fanlight and 6 panel door approached by 3 steps. No 12 entered from side.

Listing NGR: SU7135273250

#### Legacy

Legacy System number: 38820

Legacy System: LBS

## Assessment of Significance:

*Heritage has cultural, social, economic and environmental values. The attributes that combine to define the significance of a historic building can relate to its physical properties or to its context. – BS 7913:2013.*

*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 – NPPF*

**Archeological:** *As defined in the Glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework, there will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.*

The proposed works do not involve any below ground works so an archaeological assessment has not been carried out as part of this report.

**Historic:** *An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history, but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.*

St Marys Butts is located in one of the oldest parts of Reading. The evangelical church itself stands on the site of the former Reading Gaol and a Norman Arch. Much of the history can be found in the detailed Listing description for the building which outlines its building and the changes to the property over time outlining the historical significance of the property.

The building remains a church as it was originally intended to be. The church plan and interior fittings are highlighted in the listing as being illustrative of non-conformist worship throughout England in the late C18 and early C19.

The interior of the nave largely dates from 1798. It is rectangular and laid out with timber box pews of raised and fielded panelling, either side of a mid-C19, geometric, coloured tile floor. The box pews are numbered with plaques and many carry informal carvings with the name of their owners and the date 1798 or 1799. Doric columns painted to resemble marble (scagliola), rise to support a gallery to three sides, faced with moulded panels, fronting raked, box pews. The columns appear to continue through the gallery, transitioning to an Ionic form. They terminate under longitudinal beams which connect to a cornice around the walls, all of which is decorated with a modillion moulding. The nave has three, curved ceilings, with the central being higher and lit by two, late-C18 cast-iron chandeliers, under ceiling sconces.

The area of the church to which this application relates is highly historically significant.

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**Architectural or Artistic:** *These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skill, like sculpture.*

The church itself is a key focal landmark building within the Conservation area making a significant local architectural contribution to the street scene. The rear halls, a later addition, behind cannot be seen from Castle Street and do not contribute to the wider streetscene.

The building is of a distinct and unique architectural character making it quite an unusual building in the area, It started life as a relatively plain building from a streetscene perspective and then its classical portico and classical frontage was added in the 1840s. It is however the church interior which is considered to be of the highest significance as one of the finest in the Reading area with the area of works in question making a significant contribution to its overall architectural significance.

The school extension to the rear of the building added in around 1840 is functional in its design but lacking any architectural or artistic significance.



*Extract from Aerial Photo from Historic England Archive EPW022687*

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*Extract from Historic England Archive HT02070 dated 1875*

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## Historic Mapping – For reference dating only, not for reproduction

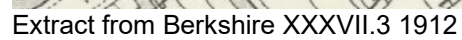
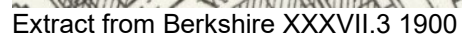


Extract from Reading Berkshire XXXVII.3.13 1879



Extract from Berkshire Sheet XXXVII 1883

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Extract from Berkshire XXXVII.3 1934



Extract from Berkshire Sheet XXXVII.NE 1944

## **Development Impact on the Historical Asset:**

*An assessment of how the proposed works will affect the significance of the heritage asset and the justification for that impact.*

*Proposals should and do:*

- 1 - Avoid, minimise and mitigate negative impact, in a way that meets the objectives of the NPPF.*
- 2 - Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance.*

## **Building Elevations and Setting:**

There are no proposed external works as part of this application. There is no impact upon the building elevations or the wider streetscene as a result of the applications proposed works and therefore no impact upon significance.

## **Internally:**

All of the proposed works relate to the interior of the main church which is hugely important to the architectural significance of the Listed Building. This is the reason for such careful discussion between consultants on the matter to ensure that the required structural repair can be carried out sufficiently to ensure structural integrity and retention of historic fabric, whilst ensuring that the architectural detailing is fully restored following water damage. This has been successfully achieved and we believe that a sympathetic and appropriate solution is proposed that causes no material harm to significance.

## **Scale and Massing:**

There is no proposed change to the scale and massing of existing street architecture. The proposals impact upon the interior of the building only and result in no external changes. There is no therefore resultant harm from a change in scale or massing.

## **Archeaology:**

There is no known impact upon below ground archaeology as there is no proposed ground works so there is no known impact to archaeological significance.

## **Use:**

The proposals do not alter the existing use of the building as a church. Instead they maintain the internal spaces in a good state of repair following a roof leak and therefore support its continuing function as a place of worship.

## Relevant Policy:

The Government has set out its planning policies framework for the historic environment in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlining the framework within which local authorities should consider the importance of conserving, or enhancing aspects of the historic environment within the planning process. This was published in March 2012 and replaced in 2018, 2019, 2021, 2023 and 2024.

Conservation as defined by the NPPF is an active process of maintenance and managing change. It requires a flexible and thoughtful approach to get the best out of assets as diverse as listed buildings in every day use and as yet undiscovered, undesigned buried remains of archaeological interest.

In the case of buildings, generally the risks of neglect and decay of heritage assets are best addressed through ensuring that they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation. Ensuring such heritage assets remain used and valued is likely to require sympathetic changes to be made from time to time. In the case of archaeological sites, many have no active use, and so for those kinds of sites, periodic changes may not be necessary, though on-going management remains important.

Where changes are proposed, the National Planning Policy Framework sets out a clear framework for both plan-making and decision-making in respect of applications for planning permission and Listed Building consent to ensure that heritage assets are conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner that is consistent with their significance and thereby achieving sustainable development. The National Planning Policy Framework defines a heritage asset as, 'a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage assets are either designated heritage assets or non-designated heritage assets.

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. 'Significance' in terms of heritage-related planning policy is defined in the Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework as the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

All heritage assets have a setting, irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not. The setting of a heritage asset and the asset's curtilage may not have the same extent.

The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to the visual relationship between the asset and the proposed development and associated visual/physical considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part in the assessment of impacts on setting, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust, smell and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places. For example, buildings that are in close proximity but are not visible from each other may have a historic or aesthetic connection that amplifies the experience of the significance of each.

The contribution that setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset does not depend on there being public rights of way or an ability to otherwise access or experience that setting. The contribution may vary over time.

When assessing any application which may affect the setting of a heritage asset, local planning authorities may need to consider the implications of cumulative change. They may also need to consider the fact that developments which materially detract from the asset's significance may also damage its economic viability now, or in the future, thereby threatening its ongoing conservation.

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.

In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of: (a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; (b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and (c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Historic England 'Conservation Principles' deem new work or alteration to be normally acceptable where the proposals do not materially harm the value of the place. They consider the setting of the heritage asset to contribute greatly to its significance. They accept that a heritage setting changes over time.

The local authority may have location specific guidance also which includes policies which seek to ensure the protection of the historic environment and that development is of a high quality and seeks to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Heritage Asset. In assessing the impact of these proposals local guidance has also been considered.

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 196) requires that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing the optimum viable use of that asset. Where a heritage asset is capable of having a use, then securing its optimum viable use should be taken into account in assessing the public benefits of a proposed development. Public benefits should flow from the proposed development. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits, for example, works to a listed private dwelling which secure its future as a designated heritage asset could be a public benefit. Examples of heritage benefits may include: sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting, reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset, securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long term conservation.

Changes to the setting of historic buildings / Conservation Areas are to be sympathetic in terms of siting, proportion, scale, form, height, materials and detailing. All design work and procedures should follow guidance outlined in BS 7913:2013 Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings.

## **Conclusion:**

There are no proposed changes to the building exterior so no impact upon wider setting.. The proposals seek to repair damage following a roof leak with limited interruption to the historic fabric using a heritage sympathetic solution.

The proposals are simple in nature and respectful in relation to the existing material palette used using traditional materials and techniques and utilizing the heritage skillsets of conservation specialists. They are the result of coordinated talks between a structural engineer, historic plaster restoration specialist and a heritage consultant in order to preserve the historic fabric and retain the significance of the architectural detailing.

The proposals retain the function as a church allowing it to continue to function in its original purpose as a church investing back into the historic fabric as is good practice. Historic England generally supports the efforts of congregations to keep their places of worship open and where the original building purpose is being supported without heritage harm.

The proposals act in accordance with the requirements of the local authority as well in accordance with Historic England development guidelines and policies.

## **Assessor Details:**

Surveyor: Michelle Purnell BA(hons) BArch RIBA MSc Building Conservation IHBC

A site visit was undertaken as part of the site investigation in order to understand important relationships in the area surrounding the site.

## **Information Source Checklist:**

*The following information sources have been used when conducting desk based research:*

Historic England List of Protected Historic Sites x

National Planning Policy Framework x

Planning Practice Guidance: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment x

Relevant Local Plans x

Conservation Area Character Appraisal x

Local Authority Landscape Character Assessment n/a

The Local List of Buildings and Monuments x

Local Records Office Other (please state):