

Whitley Villa

1 Christchurch Road, Reading RG2 7AB

HERITAGE STATEMENT

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Rev 07

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- 1.1 This Heritage Statement is submitted as part of the planning and listed building application for alterations to Whitley Villa, 1 Christchurch Road, 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 Whitley Villa is Grade II listed, and located within the Christchurch 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).
- 1.3 Whitley Villa dates from the early C19.
- 1.4 This document should be read in conjunction with the associated proposed drawings.
- 1.5 **Relevant Planning Policy**
Relevant forthcoming planning policy with respect to the heritage character of the conservation area and historic buildings are as follows:
Reading Borough Council Local Plan 2019:
Policy EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment,
Policy EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas.

1.6 Relevant Planning History for Whitley Villa:

Application ref.	Summary	Date
030928	Remove existing metal casement windows from ground and first floor bays. Replace outer two windows with fixed sepele hardwood sashes and centre with double spring loaded sashes. (Granted).	09.07.2003
970570 & 97/00309/LB	Reduce the lower ground floor slab (part) by 300mm to provide adequate headroom. (Granted).	30.09.1997
930264 & 93/00238/FD	To lay hardstanding for parking. (Granted).	03.06.1993
930254 & 93/00237/LB	Building works to form hardstanding within curtilage of listed building. (Granted).	03.06.1993
900492 & 90/00126/LB	Alterations including replacement railings, dwarf wall, new landscaping, and new pedestrian access to facilitate disabled visitors . (Granted).	21.03.1990
88/TP/0347 & 88/TP/0346	Two storey brick/slate rear extension to existing doctor's surgery for- mation of parking spaces at rear. (Granted).	11.08.1988
80/TP/0203	Change of use of first floor from residential to surgery for general medical practice. (Granted).	01.04.1980



1.8 **Historic Significance**

- 1.8.1 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'.
- 1.8.2 '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).
- 1.8.3 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).
- 1.8.4 This Heritage Statement is written within the context of relevant best practice guidance:
- Historic England (2008). Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance.
- 1.8.5 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).
- 1.8.6 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 on a gravel ridge south of the town of Reading, in what was a rural area outside of the town's boundary. Reading's south boundary shown in the 1840 map mirrored the field ownership visible in the 1721 map 'Plan of Crown Fields and Orts' -refer to Images 3 and 4, below. The Site is located directly to the east of the Reading town boundary in the 1840 map (Image 4).

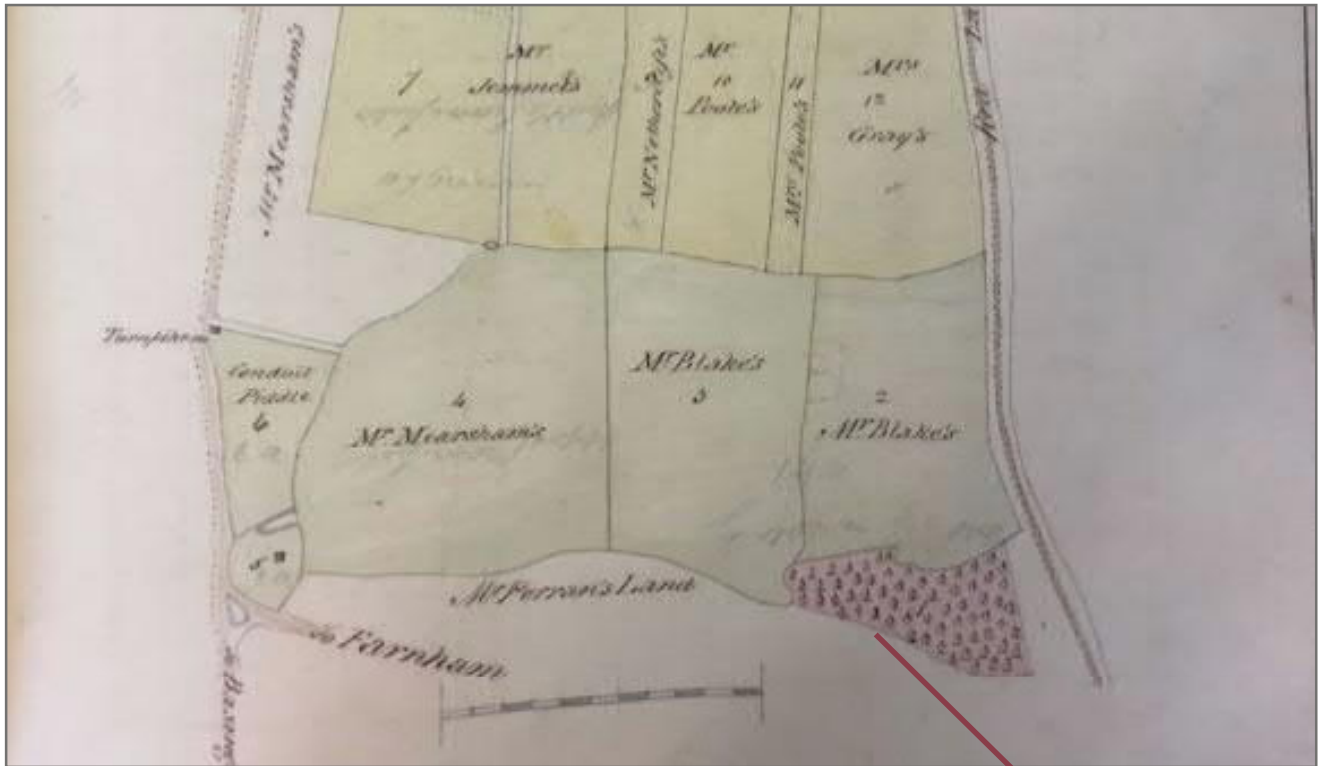


Image 3: Extract from the Conservation Appraisal document of the 'Plan of Crown Fields and Orts' map of 1721 (RBC, 2024)

Field line mirrors boundary line

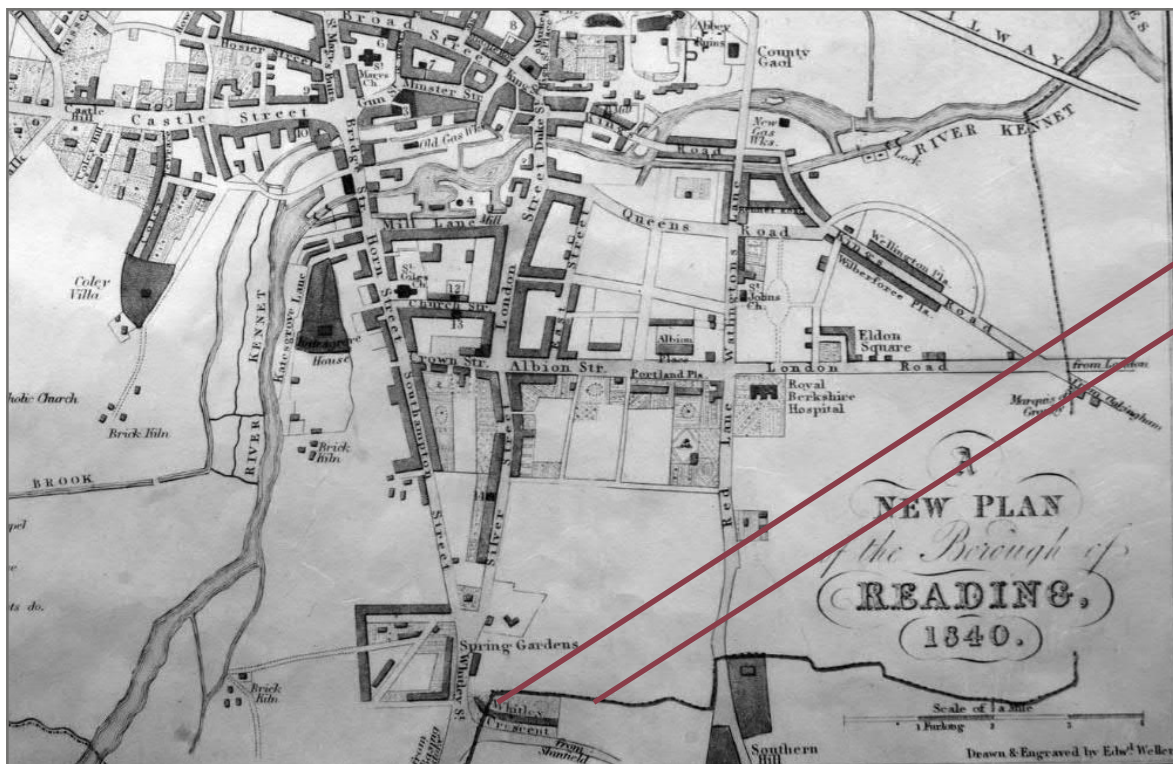


Image 4: Extract from 'A New Plan of the Borough of Reading 1840' (Accessed via 'Get Reading', 2025)

Whitley Villa, 1 Christchurch Road, Reading

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

- 2.1.2 The first buildings constructed along what was referred to as the 'Road to Farnham' or 'From Shinfield' appear to have been the Grade II listed brick-built terrace of houses, now the central 'block' of Whitley Crescent - numbers 11-25 Christchurch Road, (Historic England List Entry Number 1321966). Refer to the map extract from 1834. Brick kilns are located at this time by the River Kennet, to the west of The Site.



Image 5: Extract of the 1834 Commissioner's Map of Reading (RBC, 2024)

Central block of Whitley Crescent

- 2.1.3 By 1840 Whitley Villa appears on the map (refer to Image 3), and the 1841 map in the Conservation Area Appraisal document illustrates the individual properties to Whitley Crescent and Whitley Villa (Image 6). An out-building is indicated (in green) adjacent to the crescent, constructed in the 'second half of the C19 (RBC, 2024) as what is now No.3 Christchurch Road.

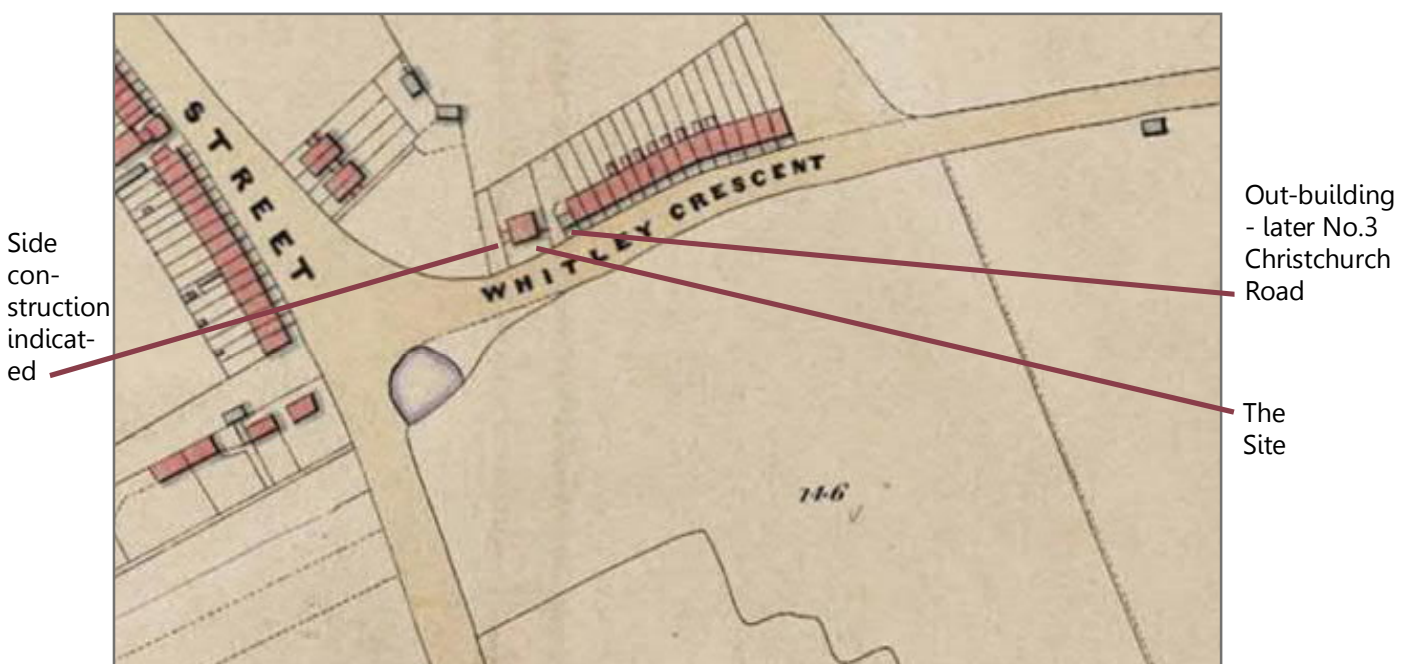


Image 6: Extract of the 'St Giles parish tithe apportionment map 1841' (RBC, 2024, courtesy of the Berkshire Record Office)

Whitley Villa, 1 Christchurch Road, Reading

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

2.1.4 The Site can be traced through later maps: the 1872 map also shows the Reading municipal boundary - as a dashed line - in place running along the west side and north sides of the Site's plot. Christ Church, which started construction in 1862, and the adjacent vicarage are now evident to the south side of the road. Royal Berkshire History suggests the name of the road was changed to 'Christchurch Road' in 1872 (Facebook, 2025).

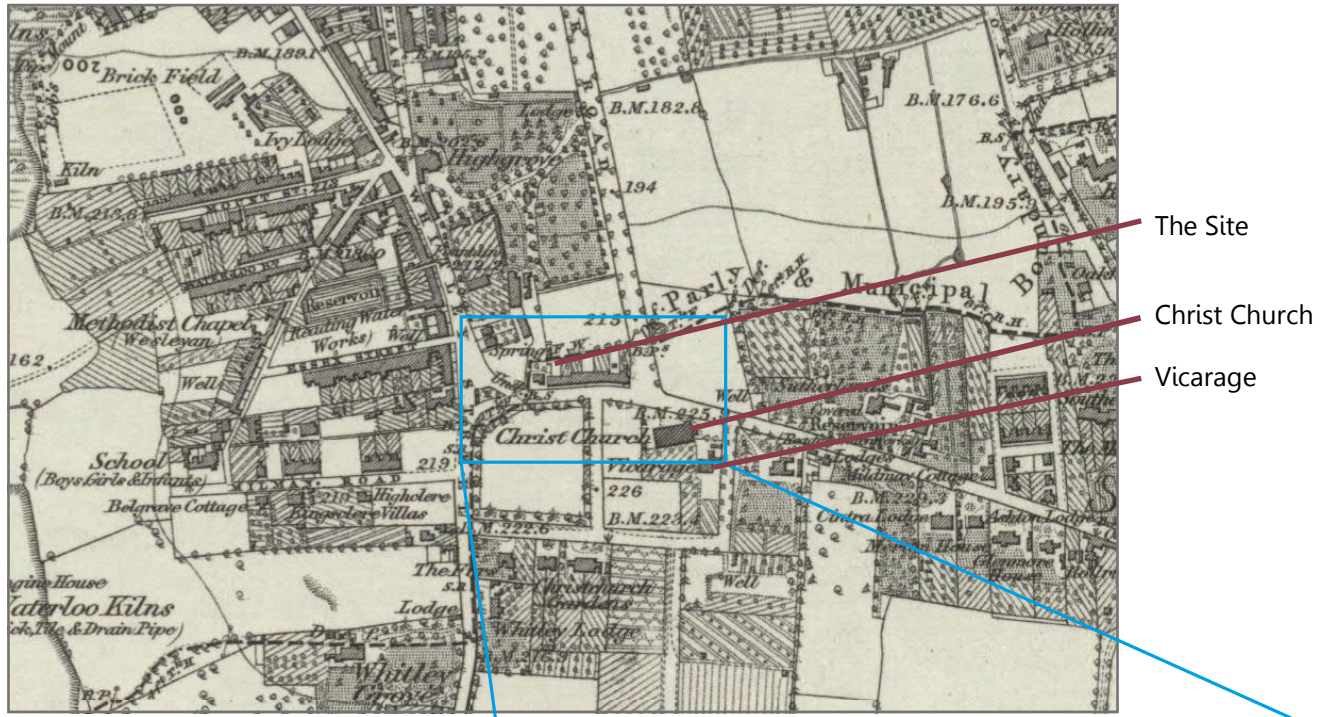


Image 7a: Extract of the Berkshire XXX-VII map from 1872, published 1877 (National Library of Scotland, 2025).



Image 7b: Detail of Image 7a

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

2.1.5 The 1877 map shows more detail to the plot, which includes the side construction to the west elevation, and a rear out-building. The map shows access to the rear of the plot from the main road via the gap between Whitley Villa and the recently constructed No.3 Christchurch Road. The rear garden appears to stretch directly to the rear of No.3 and it is not clear where the boundary to the Site plot ends. A distinctive garden wall is in place between No.s 3 and 5 Christchurch Road; the rear corner of No.3 is shown curved as if to accommodate a turning circle (possibly for a horse and carriage). The front two gardens are drawn as a mirrored footpath, rather than distinguishing either separately. These factors suggest a co-dependent or agreed relationship with between these two buildings at this time. At this time there is no tree in the location of the current one at the southwest corner of the plot; that with the tree preservation order.

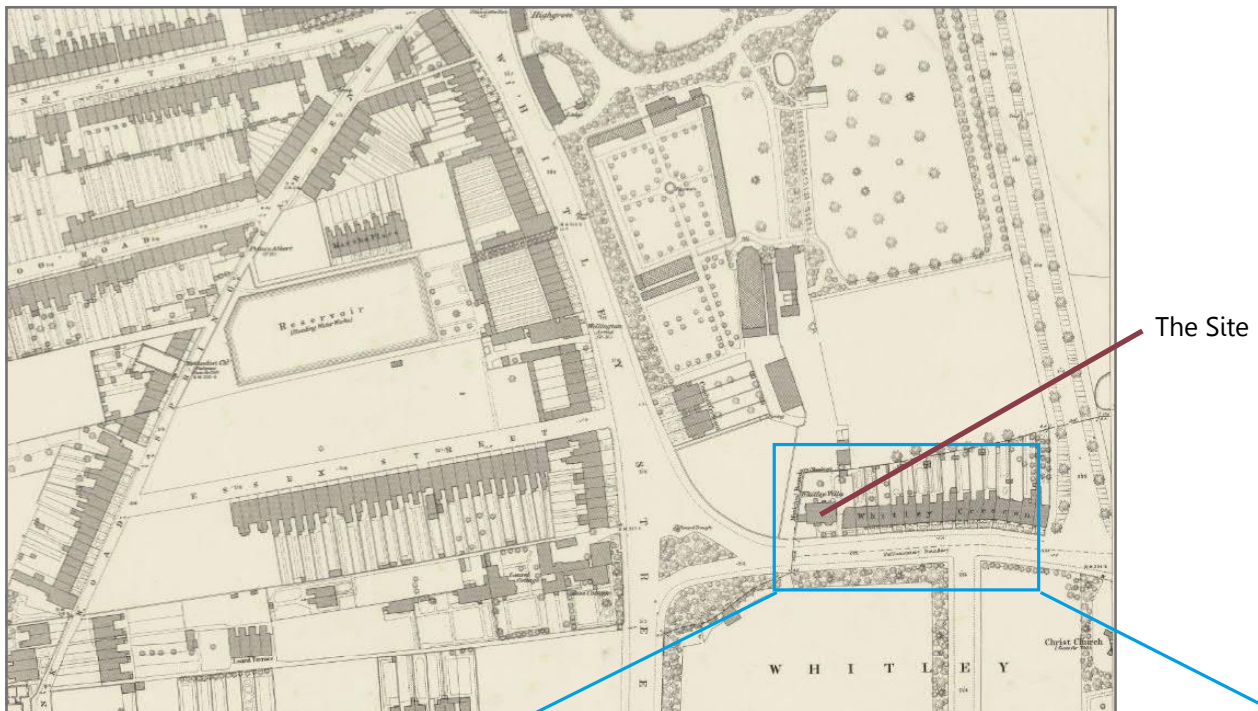


Image 8a: Extract of the Berkshire XXX-VII.7.4 map from 1877, published 1879 (National Library of Scotland, 2025).

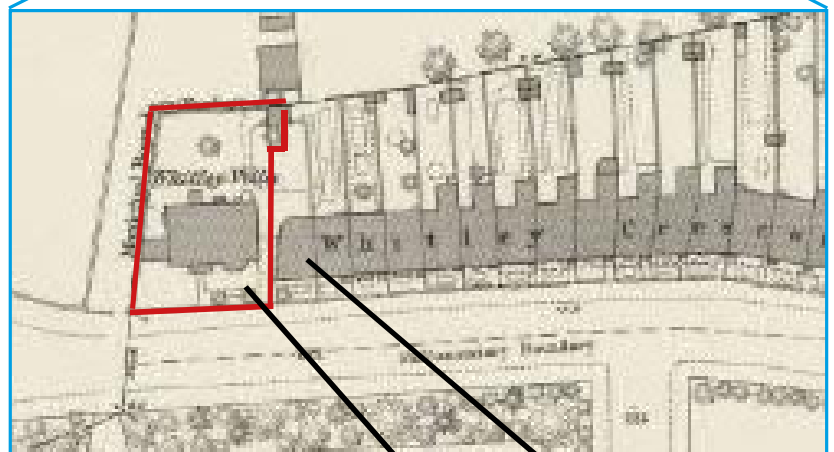


Image 8b: Detail of Image 8a

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

2.1.6 By 1898, the plot belonging to No.3 has been clarified (Image 9a and b, below), with the boundary stepping around the out-building. The fields encircled with trees opposite the Whitley Villa, to the south of the road, remain undeveloped - giving the appearance of a 'village green'. Long views from Whitley Villa are afforded to the north and south, and towards the church. Highgrove Street has been created along the west boundary of the property. A number of detached properties larger than Whitley Villa are notable in the vicinity, some semi-detached, however the predominant typology is that of terraced houses to both east and west of the Site. There are very few neighbouring properties of the same scale as Whitley Villa - most are either substantially larger, or smaller.

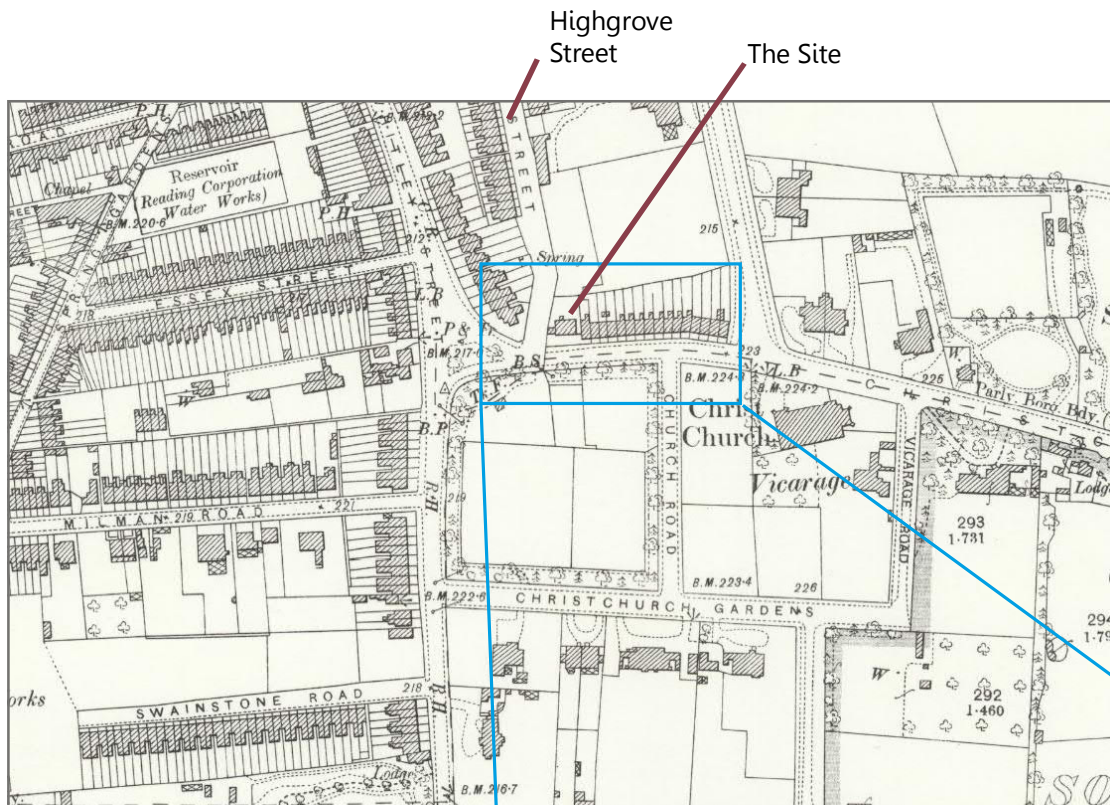


Image 9a: Extract of the Berkshire XXX-VII.7 map from 1898, published 1899 (National Library of Scotland, 2025).

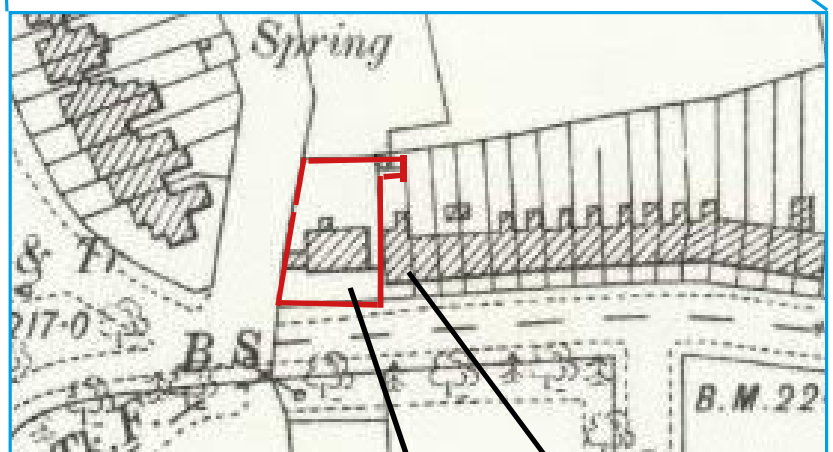


Image 9b: Detail of Image 9a

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

2.1.7 By 1910, the view south from the Site is now restricted by new semi-detached housing to the 'village green' urban block. The form of the Site remains unaltered. The 1910 Valuation Office records the property was occupied and owned by a Mr. George William Eltenton. It is noted a person of the same name, stated to live at Chesham Villa, New Road, Reading in 1899 at the time when he sold his interest pertaining to a property in Lewes All Saints, Brighton, after acquiring the deeds in 1885 - at which time he was living in Lewes All Saints (The National Archives, 2025). It is not known when he moved or owned Whitley Villa, although the sale of the Lewes All Saints property may coincide with a move from New Road, whose houses were, and are, predominantly semi-detached, situated just off the east end of Christchurch Road, northwest of the Whiteknights Park (now University of Reading's Whiteknights Campus); the move may therefore have represented a change to a larger, detached property in 1899/1900.

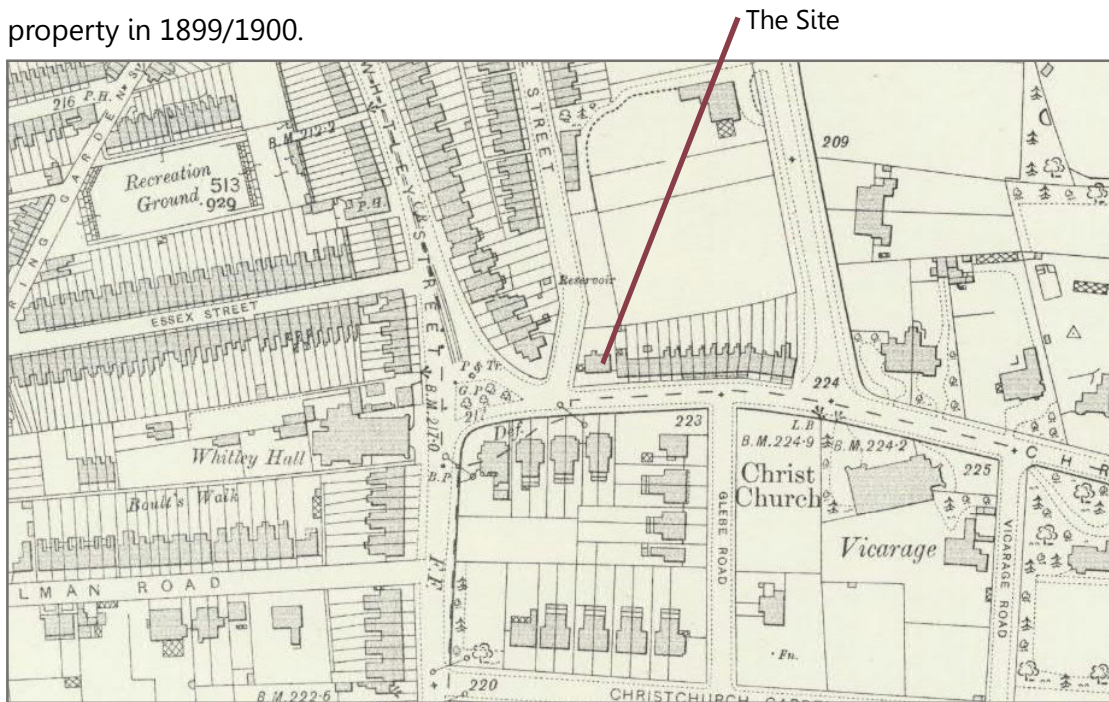


Image 10: Extract of the Berkshire XXXVII.7 map from 1910, published 1911 (National Library of Scotland, 2025).

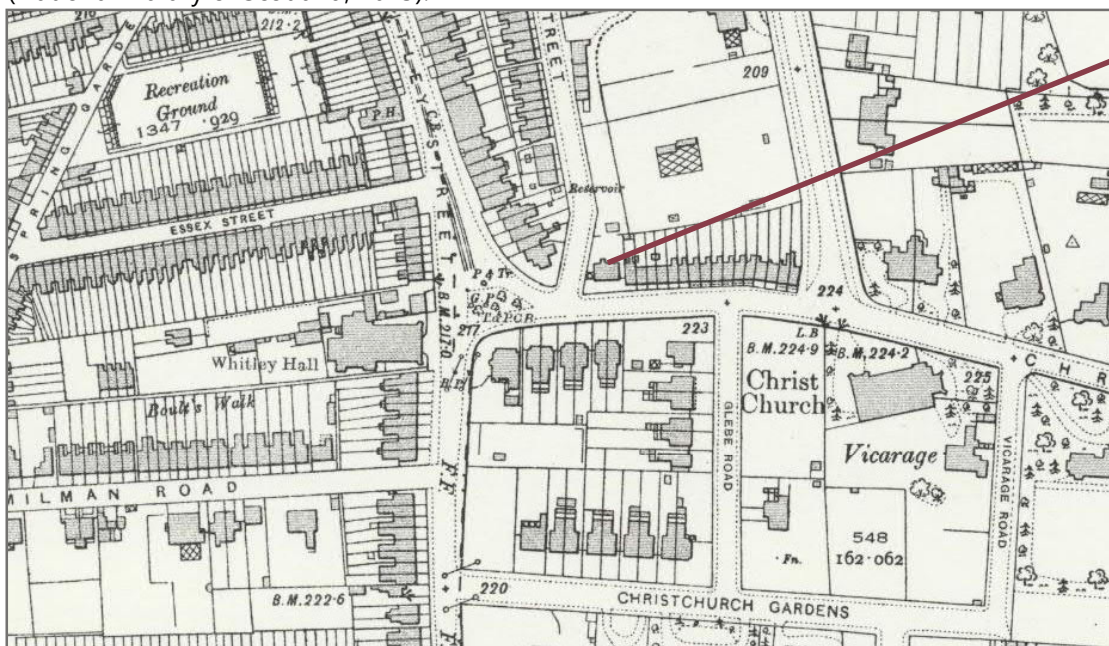


Image 11: Extract of the Berkshire XXXVII.7 map from 1932/33, published 1934 (National Library of Scotland, 2025).

Whitley Villa, 1 Christchurch Road, Reading

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

2.1.8 The 1957 map identifies the property as a surgery (Image 12), and incorporates an outbuilding to the north of the previous boundary (refer to the 1932/33 map, Image 11) into the curtilage. The 1939 register of occupants for the address identifies a Mr and Mrs Simmons, aged 28 and 27 respectively, who are recorded as being married in the District of Bangor (Wales) between October-December of 1938 (The National Archives). Mr Simmons is registered as a medical practitioner, and Mrs Simmons as a 'Retired State Registered Nurse'. It is possible part of the property became a doctor's surgery under the occupation of Mr Simmons. The later map from 1971 shows little change to the property, other than a rear access from Highgrove Street appears to have been created, denoted by a break in the boundary (Image 13).



Image 12: Extract of the Berkshire XXXVII.7 map from 1957, published 1958 (National Library of Scotland, 2025).

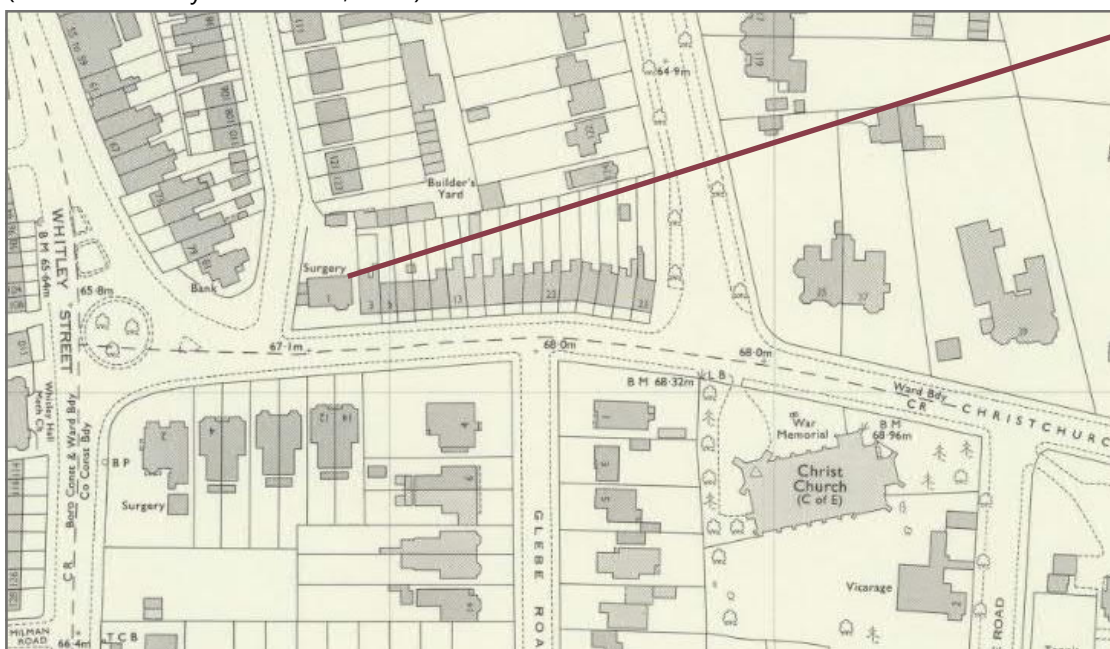


Image 13: Extract of the Berkshire XXXVII.7 map from 1971, published 1972 (National Library of Scotland, 2025).

2.2 Conservation Area - A Heritage Asset

- 2.2.1 The urban character of the conservation area is controlled by the geography of the area: in particular the gravel east-west ridge of high ground along which Christchurch Road follows. Views out and within the area create the aesthetic backdrop, enhanced with verdant spaces and mature trees. One of the key views within the conservation area is that looking east-west along Christchurch Road taking in Whitely Villa and Crescent - refer to Image 14.

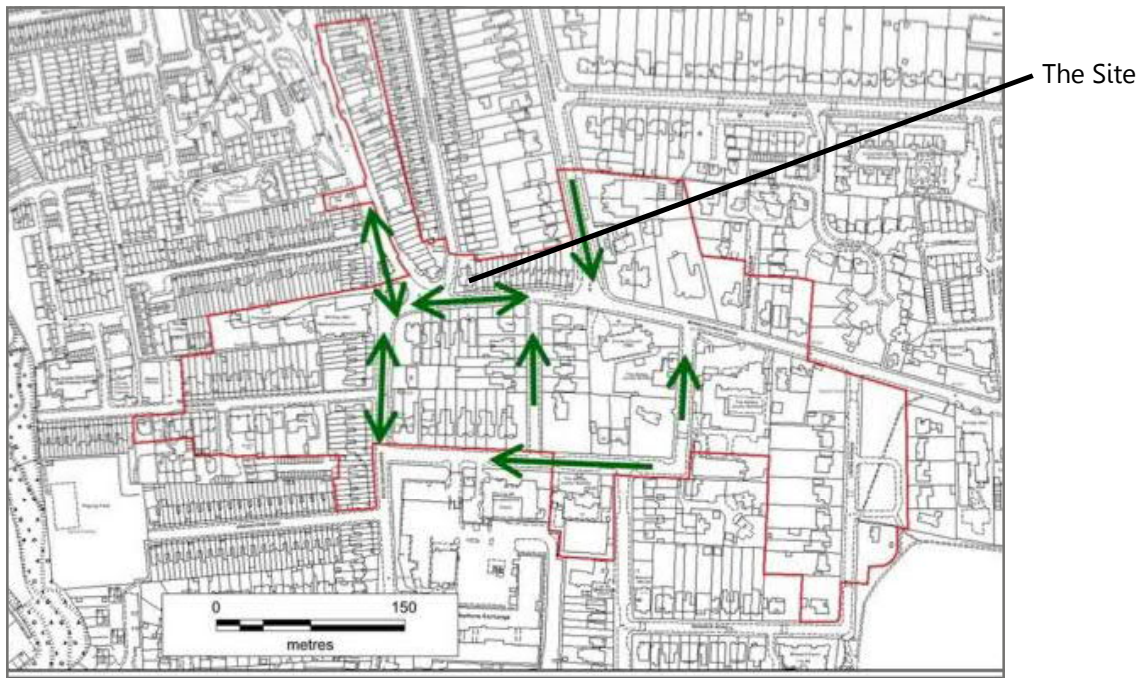


Image 14: Map 5 view within the Christchurch Conservation Area (RBC, 2024)



Image 15: Map showing the six Christchurch Conservation Area Character Areas (RBC, 2024).

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

2.2.2 Whitley Villa is within Character Area 6.1 of the Christchurch Conservation Area, a 'heritage asset' as defined by the NPPF - refer to Image 15 on page 14 - described as 'The Georgian group of houses in Christchurch Road' (RBC, 2024). The six character areas are denoted by age, with the first, 6.1, the earliest by predominant construction. These properties are set along the high point of the gravel ridge and form a gentle curve, presenting a formal architecture frontage to the main road, and views from their more informal north aspect towards Reading town, built prior to 1840 when Whitley was a rural area, separate from the town of Reading.

2.3 **Adjacent Heritage Assets whose Setting could be impacted**

- 2.3.1 The landmark of Grade II* listed Christ Church surmounts the hill in a commanding position at the top of Kendrick Road (List Entry No. 1113441).
- 2.3.2 No.s 3-9 Christchurch Road (odd) Grade II listed terraced houses immediately adjacent to Whitley Villa, (List Entry No. 1154854), constructed pre-1840 (Berkshire Archaeology, 2025), and the adjacent terrace constructed prior to these No.s 11-25 Christchurch Road (odd) - refer also to paragraph 2.1.2. No.s 27-33 Christchurch Road (odd) (List Entry No. 1154859) lie immediately east of these.
- 2.3.3 A number of high quality larger properties survive, composed of polychromatic bricks and tiles sourced from Poulton's Waterloo Kilns directly west of the area on the River Kennet. With regards high quality architecture design, Alfred Waterhouse's work is represented at The Vicarage from 1871, (List Entry No. 1113601) (now The Abbey School), and the west end of Christchurch Road is anchored by the Edwardian Baroque Hindu Temple (formerly the Whitley Methodist Hall), by Cooper & Howell (RBC, 2024). No.114 Kendrick Road is locally listed, assigned 27.02.2013, noted as being within a 250m radius of The Site (Berkshire Archaeology, 2025)¹.

¹ Recorded as 'DRM2844' on *Reading Borough's List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures*

2.4 Historic Environment Record

2.4.1 Berkshire Archaeology was consulted with respect to the Historic Environment Record for a '250m radius search around Whitley Villa, 1 Christchurch Road, Reading'.

The nearest archaeological 'event' is recorded as a desk-based assessment at 110/112 Whitley Street (Event ID ERM906) - (refer to Image 15). The summary states, 'The site is within an area of high archaeological potential...' (Berkshire Archaeology, 2025).

Berkshire Archaeology advised, "there are no Registered Parks and Gardens or Scheduled Monuments recorded within the search area".



Image 16: View of the south elevation of Whitley Villa

2.5 Whitley Villa - Grade II Listed Heritage Asset: List Description

2.5.1 Grade II

List entry number: 1113437

Date listed: 14.12.1978

"CHRISTCHURCH ROAD 1. 5128 (North Side) No 1 (Whitley Villa) SU 7272 9/431 II GV 2. Early C19. 2 storeys red brick with grey brick headers. Slate roof with brick end chimneys, gable ends treated with parapets between chimneys. 2 left hand bays original - glazing bar sashes, lengthened on 1st floor to left for balcony, marginal glazing. Wide segmental headed door surround with channelled quoins and reeded surround, radiating fanlight, 4 panel door. Mid-late C19 canted bay to right (this part plain red brick) with modern casements. Contemporary staircase. Fleur-de-lys railings and gates." (Historic England, 2025)

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

- 2.5.2 Whitely Villa incorporates a number of architectural features of interest, composed, as it was, during a transition period between late Georgian and Victoria eras. The planform reflects a classical design typology for a 'villa', as highlighted by Woodforde, after John Plaw (1800) (refer to Image 17): a central entrance door and hallway, with four reception rooms, two at the front and two at the rear. Furthermore Plaw advocates this design for a 'country retreat' - akin to the rural area Whitley was at the time of the construction of Whitley Villa. This particular typology example suggests a subservient single storey side building used as a 'washroom and bakehouse'. The OS maps consistently shows one small construction to the west elevation until 1933 (Image 11) and a second one from 1957 until 1971 (Images 12 and 13). A side construction may suggest an internal door had existed on the west elevation.
- 2.5.3 Two of the three architectural window bays of the property are of a mixture of red and grey header bricks in Flemish bond, with two grey header bricks used adjacent on occasion to create a less formal bonding pattern. The right hand bay features a double storey canted bay window feature constructed in only red brick and the bond pattern is less consistent. This feature is absent on the OS maps until 1957 (Image 12). Both the brick colour, the pattern and the OS information combine to suggest the either a one or two storey bay window was added at a later date, between 1933 and 1957, contrary to this is that double height bay windows were a popular Victorian feature, and the list description suggests this is a mid-late C19 addition.

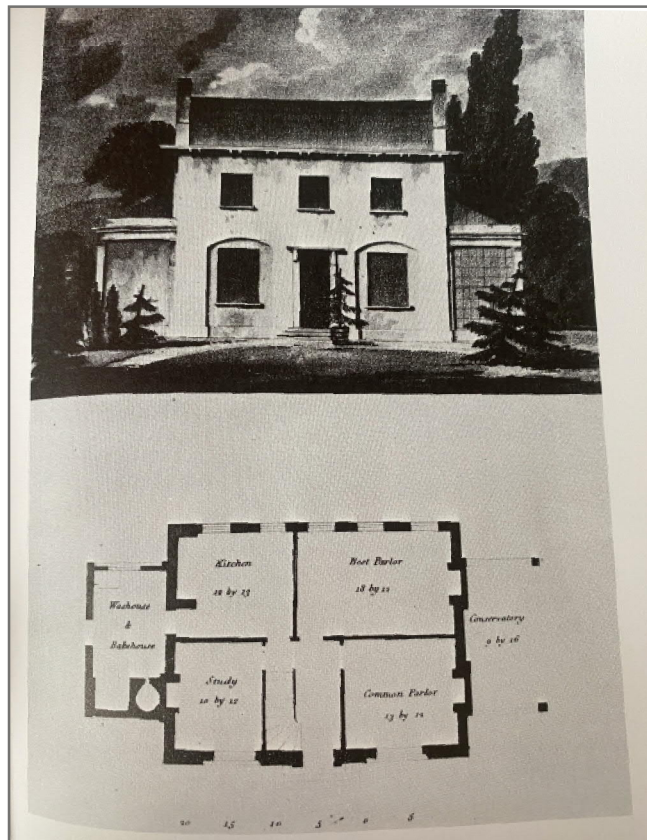


Image 17: Extract of a 'Classical Villa' typology (Woodforde, 1985, after Plaw, 1800)

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

- 2.5.4 The two triple sash windows to the western window bay feature queen closer bricks each side of the openings indicating the size of the openings are contemporary to the original construction. Both these windows provide a full height glazing experience and suggest both were public-facing rooms, with the first floor one as a possible day room from which views south over the 'village green' were enjoyed.
- 2.5.5 The first floor central window does not feature consistent queen closers which may suggest a later re-working of the opening over the entrance door. Both the first floor sash windows feature pelmets that would have hidden shading devices, reflecting the southern aspect of the elevation. The central sash is a replacement; the triple sashes are original: the small panes of glass, 10 over 10 over 10 inclusive of narrow margin lights, whoses delicate sashes do not feature horns.
- 2.5.6 Regency features include the delicate 'pagoda' style ironwork canopy over the entrance door and balcony feature at the first floor. The two outer entrance canopy posts appear to be less elegant in proportion and are likely to be later replacements.
- 2.5.7 Both the bay window and the masonry surrounding the front entrance door have been over-clad in stucco concealing the brickwork, with 'stone' coursing created by incised lines around the entrance door, and quoin-like stucco features added to the bay window. The fanlight over the entrance door is a particularly plain example and may be a replacement as it seems at odds stylistically with the relative ostentation of the triple sashes, brickwork and ironwork.



Image 18: First Floor window over entrance door

2.6 Exterior Photographs - May 2025



2.6 Exterior Photographs (cntd)



Image 21: View of along west side of Whitley Villa, northwards to Highgrove Street



Image 22: View of rear of plot and Highgrove Street

2.6 Exterior Photographs (cntd)



Image 23: View south towards Christchurch Road (Google Maps, 2020)



Image 24: View of west elevation

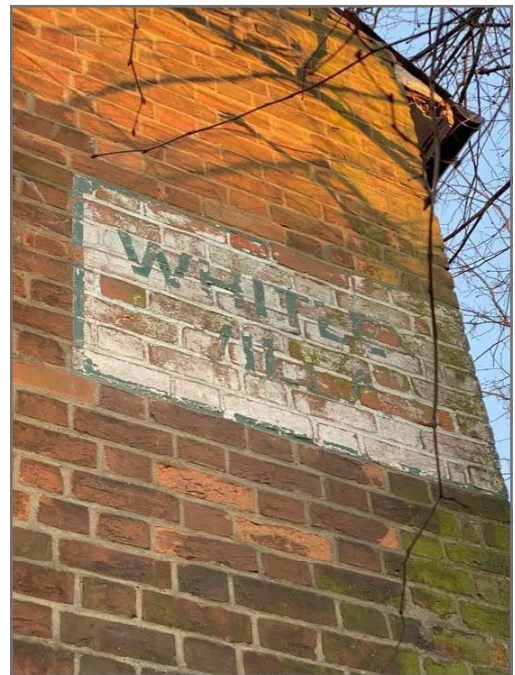


Image 25: 'Whitley Villa' sign on west elevation - in a prominent location when first built

Rendered portion conceals brickwork, however there is no 'obvious' previous opening in the brickwork that might have served the two side out-buildings

2.6 Exterior Photographs (cntd)

Note grey header bricks not used to the rear elevation - demonstrating a greater outlay of investment to the public street side rather than the private rear elevation



Image 25: View of east return of 1980's extension



Queen closers stop suggesting this was originally a window of height to match that above, rather than a full height window

Image 26: View of north elevation and 1980s extension

2.7 Interior Photographs - May 2025



Image 27: View of entrance lobby - a modern insertion

Overview

The property has been heavily remodelled and internally refurbished over the recent decades leaving very few remaining internal features. All fireplaces have been removed, there is very little original skirting, or cornices, and it is possible there is only one original door. The original staircase has been removed.

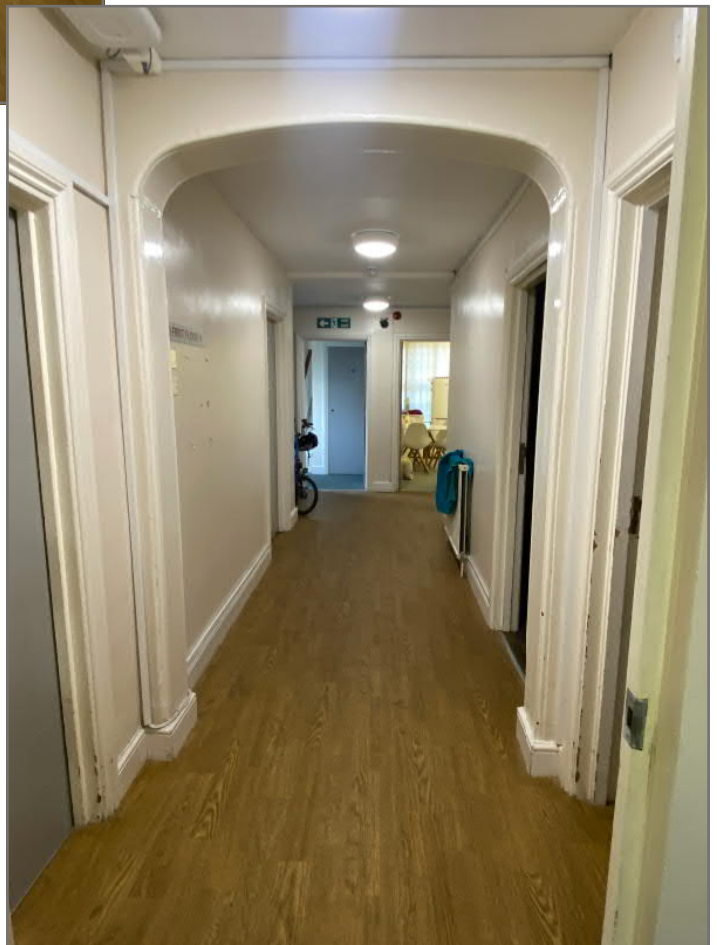


Image 28: View of entrance hall facing north with decorative archway

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

2.7 Interior Photographs (cntd) (cntd)

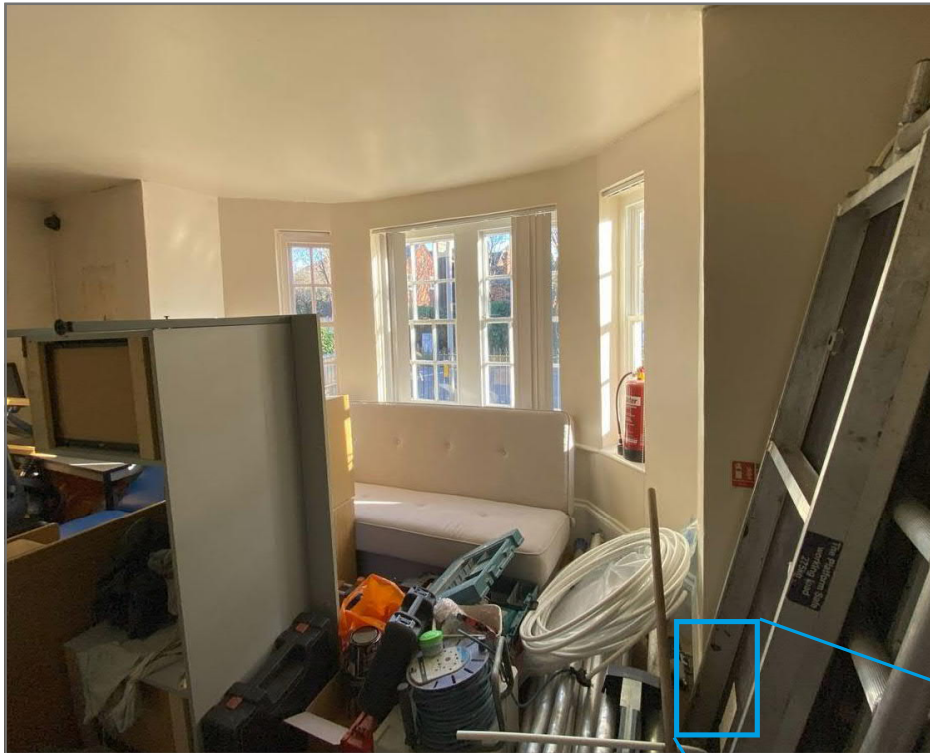


Image 29: Ground Floor reception room



Mis-matching skirting
profiles
- 310mm high
Chimney breast



Image 30: Ground Floor East Reception Room (latterly the surgery waiting room)

Two hatch
openings within
the wall

Skirting
330mm high

2.7 Interior Photographs (cntd) (cntd)



Image 31: Ground Floor west Reception Room (latterly a Consultation Room)



Image 32: Ground Floor east rear room (latterly Receptionist Room)

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

2.7 Interior Photographs (cntd) (cntd)



Image 33: Ground Floor west rear room (latterly a Consultation Room)



Boxing-in for
services from
First Floor

Cornicing cut
when separat-
ing wall was
removed in
the past, now
reinstated



Images 34a and b: Full cornicing to three walls to west rear room

2.7 Interior Photographs (cntd) (cntd)



Image 35: Staircase within rear 1980's extension

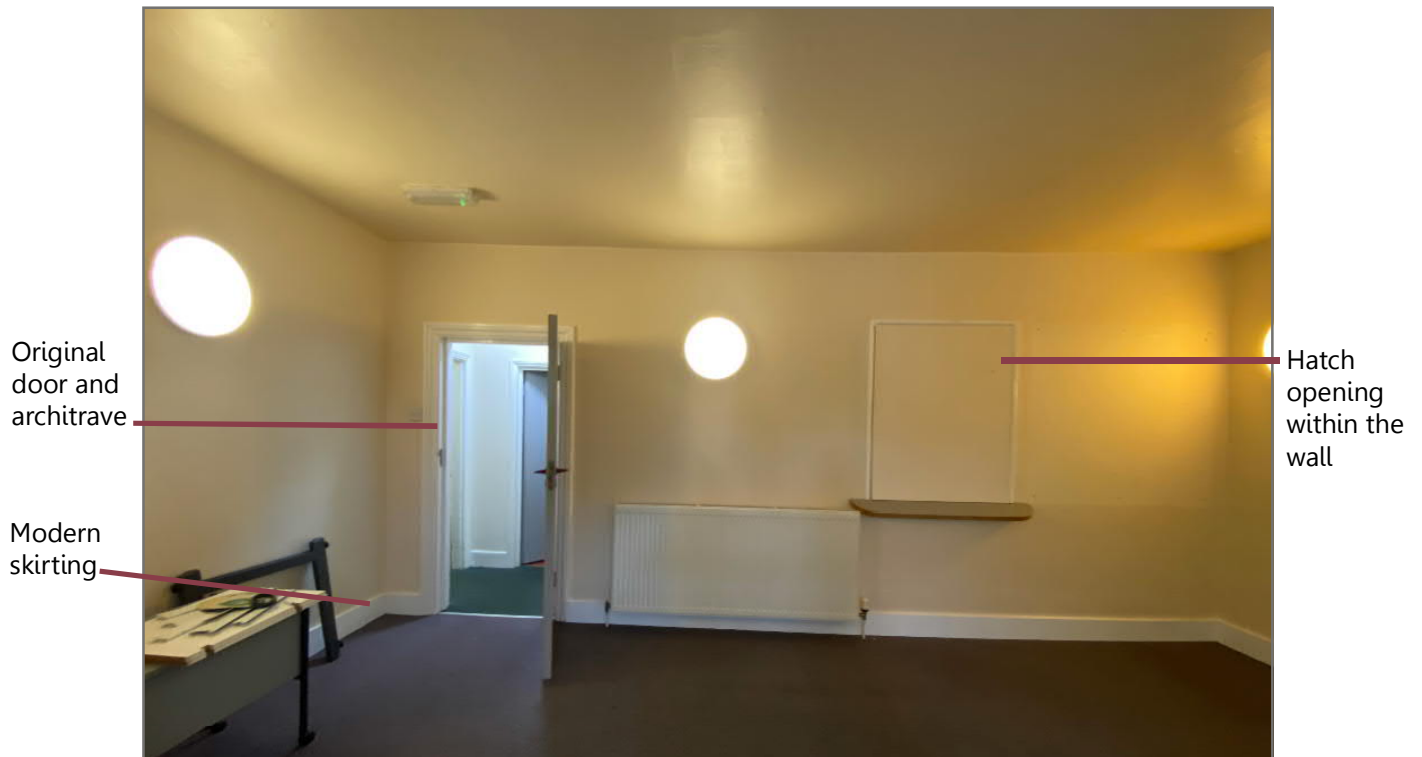


Image 36: First Floor east room (latterly Waiting Room)

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

2.7 Interior Photographs (cntd) (cntd)



Image 37: First Floor east room (latterly Waiting Room)



Image 38: First Floor west room (latterly Consultation Room)

2.0 THE NATURE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS (cntd.)

2.7 Interior Photographs (cntd) (cntd)

Original sash window



Chimney breast

Image 39: First Floor east rear room (latterly Waiting Room)



Image 40: Ground Floor rear extension room (latterly Nurses' Room)

2.8 Phased Floor Plans

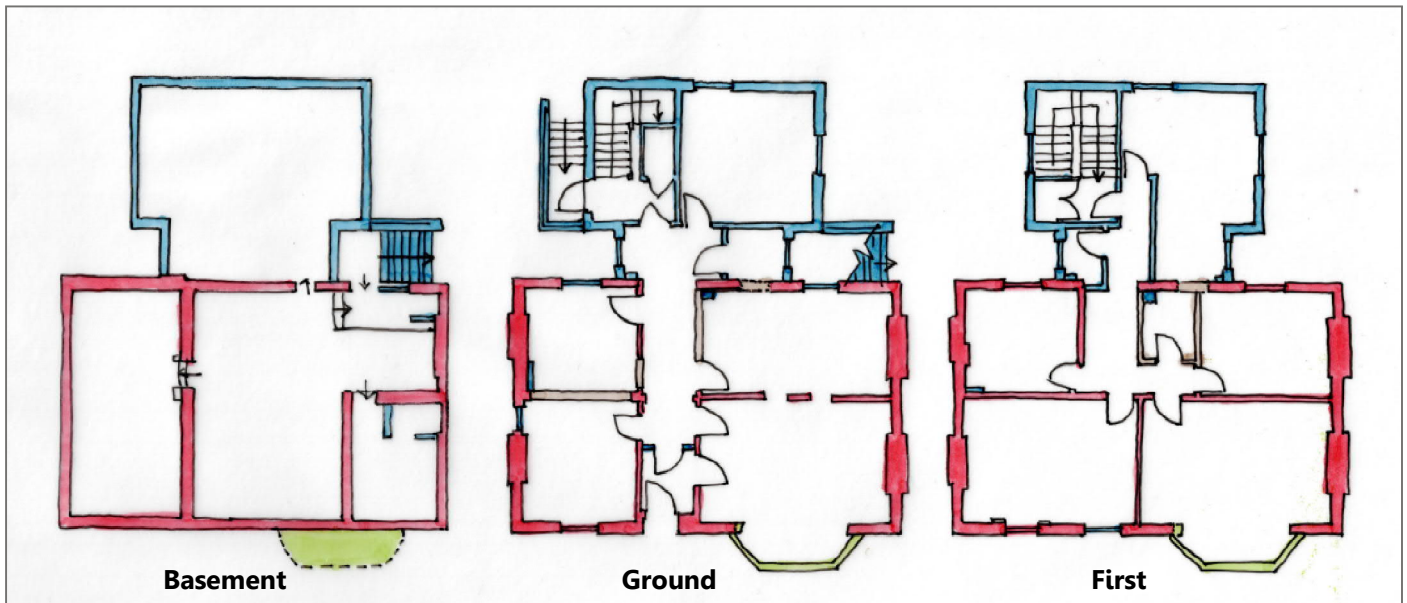


Image 41: Existing Floor Plans

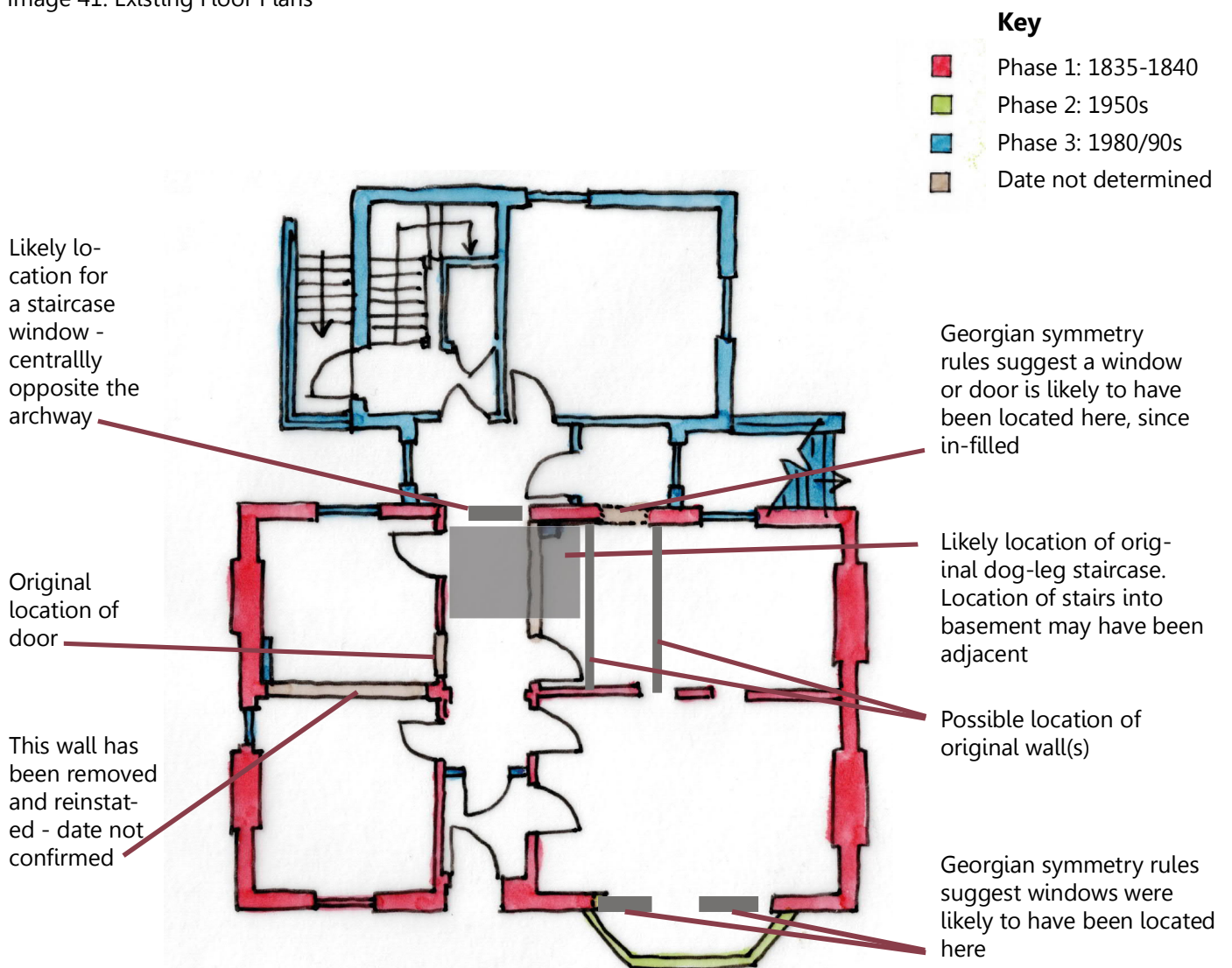


Image 42: Existing Ground Floor Plan Annotated

2.8 Phased Floor Plans (cntd) (cntd)

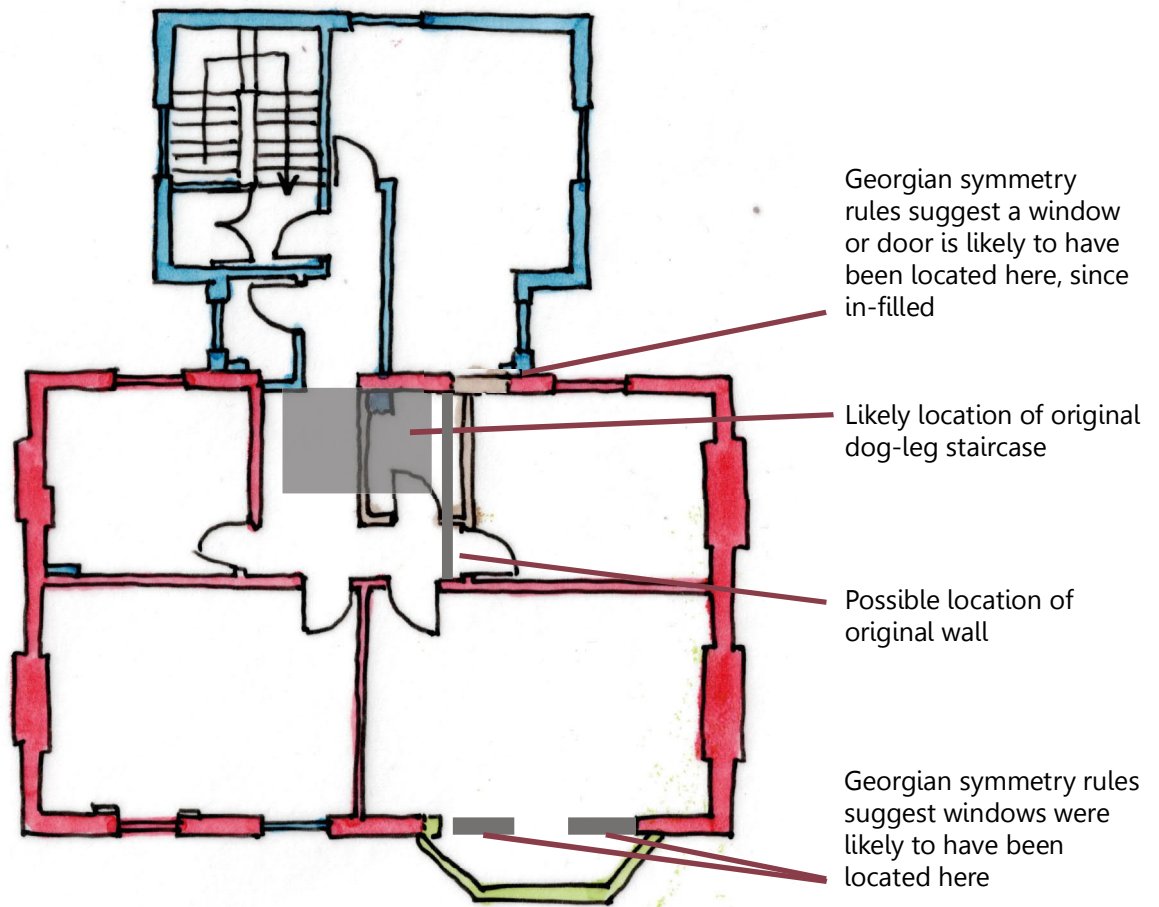


Image 43: Existing First Floor Plan Annotated

2.8.1 **Phase 1 Summary: 1835-1840 initial construction**

The design, largely outlined in paragraph 2.3.3 was for a domestic 'villa' - as the painted sign announcement to the west elevation. Evidence has not been identified regarding the original floor plan to date, however there is sufficient surviving clues to indicate the likely layout. The central staircase would have been relatively grand, wider than the resultant hallway space. Georgian architectural symmetry suggests where windows or door openings may have been in the past as noted in Images 42 and 43, however these have not been confirmed.

2.8.2 **Phase 2 Summary: 1950s re-modelling**

Evidence for substantial changes in the period are lacking, however the introduction of the double height bay window caused a substantial aesthetic change and arguably an imbalance to the facade design. It is a similar era to when the property became a surgery and this may have been a period of investment into the property, and a pronouncement to the main street. The doctor remained in the property as both the place of residence and work.

2.8.3 **Phase 3 Summary: 1980/90s refurbishment and extension works**

As the surgery expanded all domestic use was turned over to public use (planning reference 80/TP/0203), and later demand supported the expansion of the building in the creation of the two-storey rear extension. Plans for the changes made under the planning applications 88/TP/0347 and 88/TP/0346 have been requested from RBC but these remain in storage for the immediate future. Once located, it is anticipated an improved understanding of the 'original' layout may be discovered. Despite this, it is largely possible to trace the changes made to the property, particularly given the high possibility of a symmetrical Georgian design having been originally adopted for a well appointed 'villa' in the countryside.

3.1 Heritage 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 Heritage Significance of Christchurch Conservation Area

Based on the tabulated criteria in 3.1, the Christchurch 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 conservation area appraisal document highlights that Paleolithic and Neolithic tools have been discovered in parts of the conservation area (RBC, 2024).
- Similarly the conservation area appraisal document notes the continued importance of the geology and specifically the gravel ridge whose influence has informed communication patterns in the area (RBC, 2024).
- Berkshire Archaeology summarised the nearby site at 110-112 Whitley Road has 'high archaeological potential' (2025).

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

3.2.2 **Historic interest:**

- As a rural suburb of Reading until relatively recently (1887) there is some historic interest with respect to the urban and social development of Reading and taxation boundaries.
- The history of inhabitation in the area of families of high social standing within Reading.

The level of historic heritage interest is therefore 'medium'.

3.2.3 **Architectural and artistic interest:**

- The high quality of architecture for a few key buildings by nationally notable architects is of high interest.
- The use of local materials directly adjacent to the conservation area, and particularly where used in a flamboyant and artistic manner to showcase the capabilities of the local manufacturers.

The combination of high quality architecture and adoption of local materials has resulted in an interesting combination of formal architecture and 'vernacular' materials and could be considered of 'high' historic significance to the conservation area.

3.3 **Heritage significance of Whitley Villa and its Setting**

Based on the tabulated criteria in 3.1, Whitley Villa, 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 heritage interest is therefore 'medium/high'.

3.3.2 **Historic interest:**

- Social-economic: the location of the property on high ground in a rural suburb may hold some historic interest, beyond the remit of this document.
- The origins of the property: it has not been possible within the scope of this document to identify the family who commissioned the property. Owing to its age as one of the oldest properties in the immediate area it may represent a property of a wealthy family, or a weekend 'country' villa retreat in such a prominent and verdant location at that time.
- The relationship of Whitley Villa with the neighbouring No.3 Christchurch Road appears to have been possibly interconnected initially - which suggests the potential for further historic investigation

The level of historic heritage interest of Whitley Villa is considered to be 'medium'.

3.3.3 Architectural and artistic interest:

The architectural and artistic interest are of relatively local interest rather than national when paired with the loss of the majority of the interior details as much information about the lifestyle of the past inhabitants has been lost.

- The remaining original sash windows
- The triple sash windows to both the ground and first floors suggest a desire for high connection to the south aspect of the house.
- The delicate ironwork to the balcony and the 'pagoda' style canopy connecting the architecture to the Regency period which creates an aesthetic connection with similar details to Whitley Crescent
- The polychromatic brickwork to the south elevation
- The painted 'Whitley Villa' sign on the west elevation

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

3.4 Factors that detract from the historic significance and offer opportunities for improvement

- The loss of the rear garden
- The erosion of the plot boundary to the north and part of the west

3.5 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.

3.5.1 *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).

3.5.2 The setting, as contibutes to historic significance of Whitley Villa and the Christchurch Conservation Area, can be considered to be experienced in the view east-west along the Christchurch Road along the gravel ridge and its contribution to the setting of the gently curving Whitley Crescent. The verdant nature of the front garden reflects the wider character of the conservation area. The brick wall along the west boundary of the plot reflects the historic boundary of Whitley with Reading.

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 Whitley Villa 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 of the Proposals

4.2.1 The proposals respond to feedback received as part of the pre-app PL/25/0284 (16.04.2025), an in-person meeting with Reading Borough Council (04.06.2025), and subsequent correspondence via e-mail between the project architect and RBC.

4.2.2 The proposal is for a change of use from surgery to three flats, with associated internal alterations and re-landscaping of the site. These changes shall be assessed for their impact upon the historic significance of The Site and its setting.

4.3 Proposed change of use from surgery to three flats

The reversion of the property from a services-led use to its original use as a dwelling is considered appropriate to the historical use of the property. The change of use will reverse the deterioration of the quality of the internal and external spaces that has been evident in the building's conversion from a home-based local doctor's service provision as part of a doctor's house, to a large-scale surgery for a wider population, and therefore a greater intensity of use, than originally conceived. This is seen as a positive enhancement to Whitley Villa and the wider conservation area.

Impact upon the heritage significance of the heritage assets: Positive

4.4 Proposed external landscape design

The proposal seeks to reinstate a plot boundary evident in the 1877 OS map (refer to Image 8a) which is considered an improvement to both the boundary within the conservation area, and to the setting of the property, and that of No.3 Christchurch Road as viewed from Highgrove Street.



Site boundary reinstated as per the 1877 plot

The introduction of a designed soft landscaping scheme and consequent removal of the hard landscaping to the rear of the property will emulate what had been the rear garden of the original house, prior to the modern extension, and enhance the change of use of the property to a dwelling.

Impact upon the historic significance of the heritage assets: Positive

Image 44: Proposed Site Plan

Whitley Villa, 1 Christchurch Road, Reading

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

4.5 Proposed alterations to the Ground Floor layout

- 4.5.1 The proposals indicate adjustments to the modern wall construction within the modern extension which will have no impact upon the historic significance of the property. A new wall is proposed to be introduced to the rear east room to create a bathroom and kitchen. The existing door and wall opening locations are used to create access with minimal change. The new wall could be removed in the future.
- 4.5.2 The existing drainage route is proposed to be reused to support the new en-suite, and separately the existing drainage route shall be reused to collect the new bathroom and kitchen fittings. Ventilation to the bathroom and kitchen is proposed to be connected to external air brick vents on the east elevation either side of the chimney breast and are considered of minimal aesthetic impact - refer to the proposed elevation.
- 4.5.3 The acoustic report has confirmed secondary glazing would be required to the rooms facing onto Christchurch Road. The bay window is composed of three deep-revealed windows - refer to Image 29. The proposed solution is therefore to install proprietary glazing system into the reveals (Selectaglaze Type S1 - refer to architect's information). The solution to the secondary glazing solution to the proposed study - refer to Image 31 - is to remove the security bars and to install the Selectaglaze Type S4 which would create a deep reveal to provide the depth necessary to impact the acoustic performance. The removal of the security bars - not now required as no commercial pharmaceuticals shall be stored in the building under a change of use to residential - is considered a positive to the aesthetic of the property and that of the conservation area. Both secondary glazing solutions are reversible should this be required in the future and would enable the property to be occupied comfortably

Impact upon the heritage significance of the heritage asset: No harm

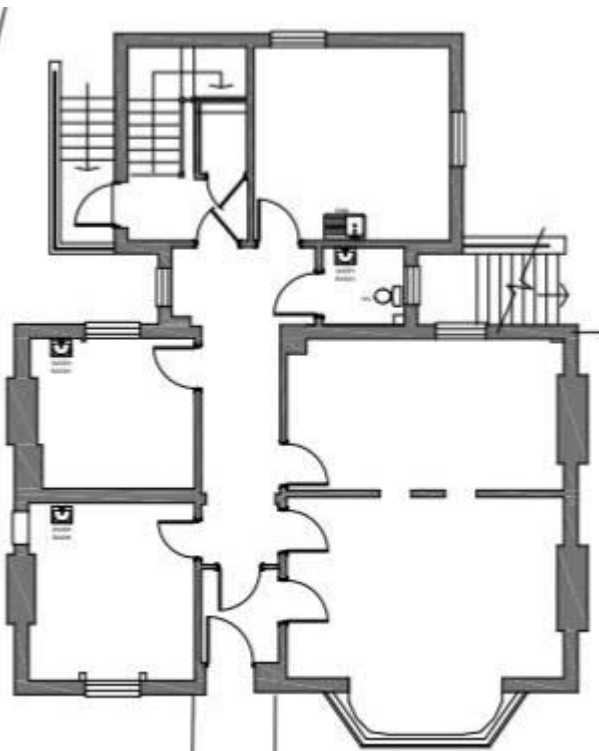


Image 45a: Existing Ground Floor Plan

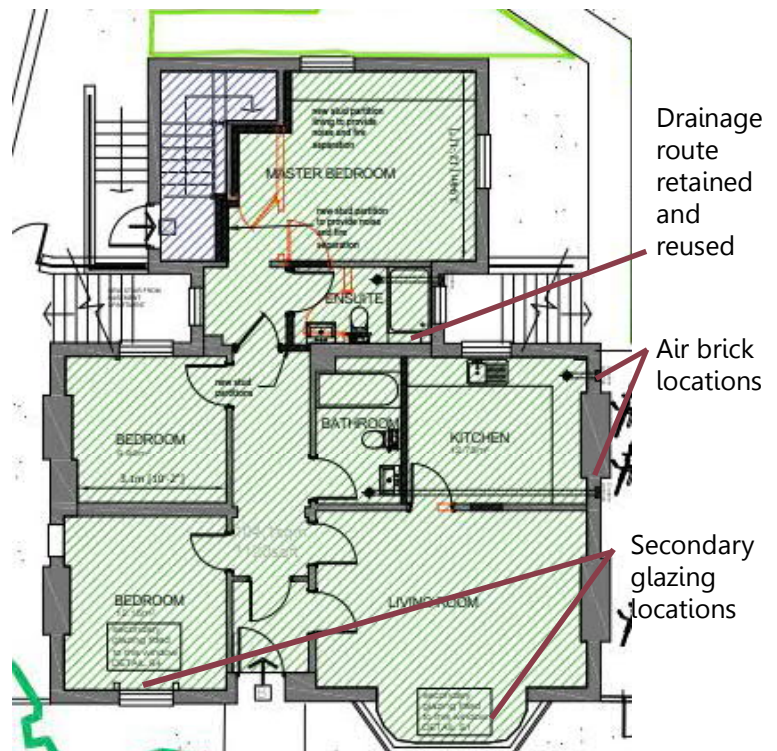


Image 45b: Proposed Ground Floor Plan

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

4.6 Proposed alterations to the First Floor layout

The proposals indicate adjustments to the modern wall construction within the modern extension which will have no impact upon the historic significance of the property. The new en-suite would connect to the existing drainage route and therefore does not impact the historic fabric or heritage significance. Ventilation to the new shower room is proposed to be taken vertically into the roof space and connect to a roof vent tile at the rear roof face, with no adverse affect upon the heritage significance of the property or the conservation area. Ventilation for the kitchen is proposed to be taken to the east elevation via an air brick with minimal aesthetic impact - refer to the proposed elevation. Secondary glazing is proposed as assessed in paragraph 4.5.

Impact upon the heritage significance of the heritage asset: No harm

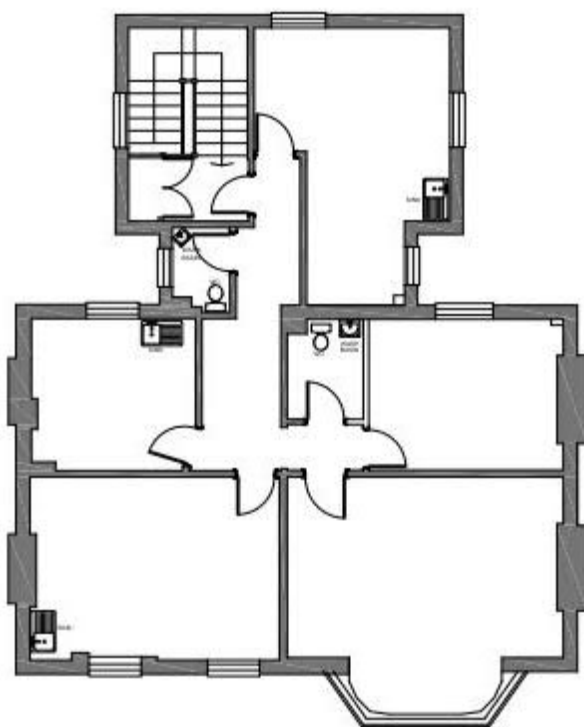


Image 46a: Existing First Floor Plan

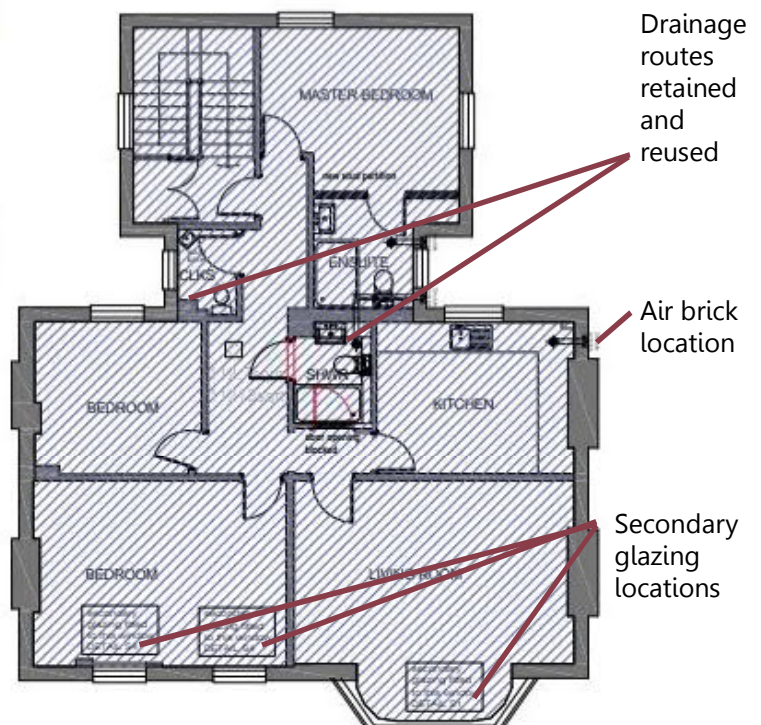


Image 46b: Proposed First Floor Plan

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

4.7 Proposed alterations to the Basement layout

The proposed adjustments will bring the Basement into habitable use and critically support viable investment into the property to refurbish the property and the wider site:

- the proposed relocation of the external entrance door to the modern wall causes no impact upon the historic significance;
- the floor level to the two areas of limited headheight are proposed to be dropped by 500mm to align with those formed in the 1997 application (970570 and 97/00309/LB). This is proposed to be carried out to avoid impacting corbelled foundations where these may be present;
- natural daylight is proposed via new windows to the north, east and west elevations to offer balanced light from all aspects. These are small, discrete openings of double glazed timber framing; and are not considered to impact the heritage significance of the property when balanced with the opportunity to meaningfully inhabit the basement space;
- the removal of walls - these hold no heritage significance and their removal, or part thereof, do not impact the heritage significance of the building.

Impact upon the heritage significance of the heritage asset: No harm

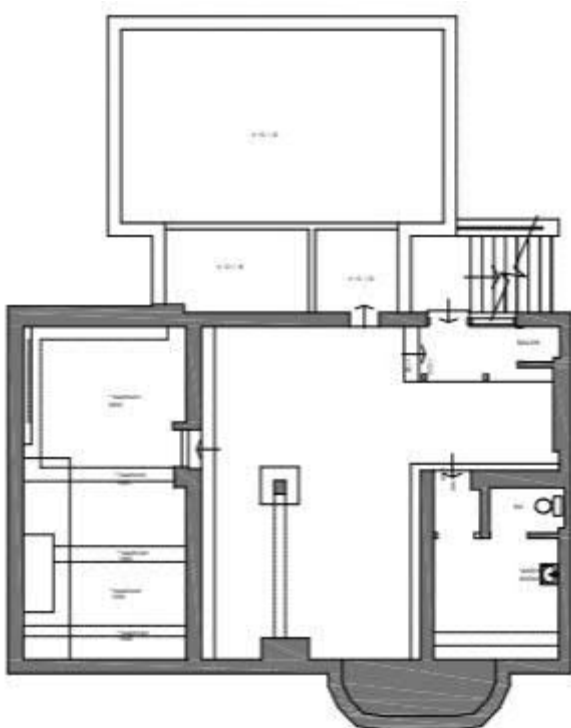


Image 47a: Existing Basement Floor Plan

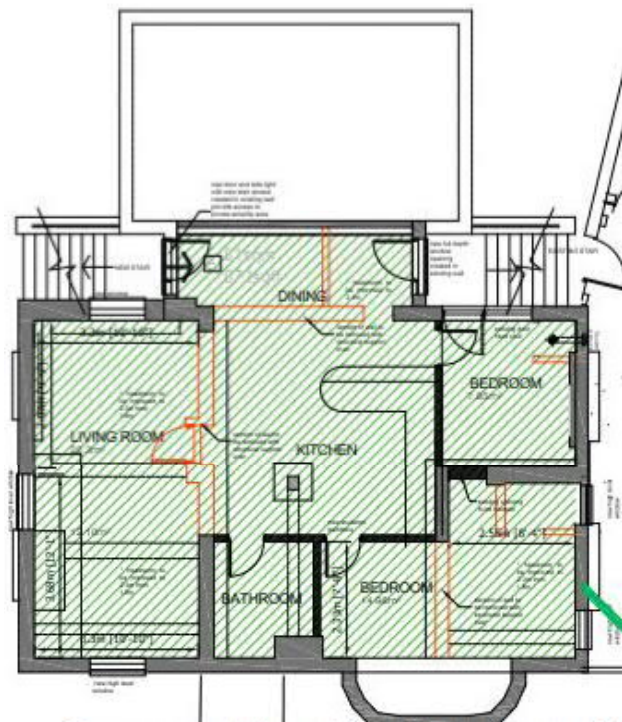


Image 47b: Proposed Basement Floor Plan

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

4.8 Proposed alterations to the elevations

The proposals include the addition of Basement level windows to the rear elevation and both side elevations to admit daylight. The window proposed to the rear elevation proportionally reflects those of the multi-paned sash window design to the Ground and First Floors above, and include enhanced brick detailing at the window head to respond to the common architectural language of the wider property (refer to Images 48a and b).

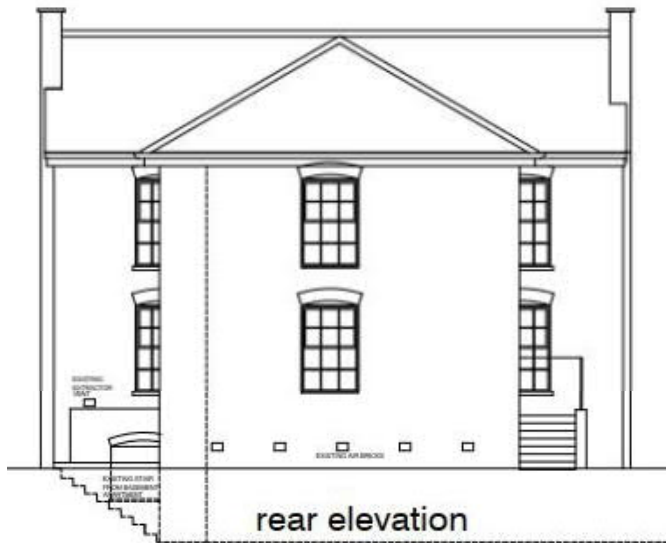


Image 48a: Existing Rear Elevation

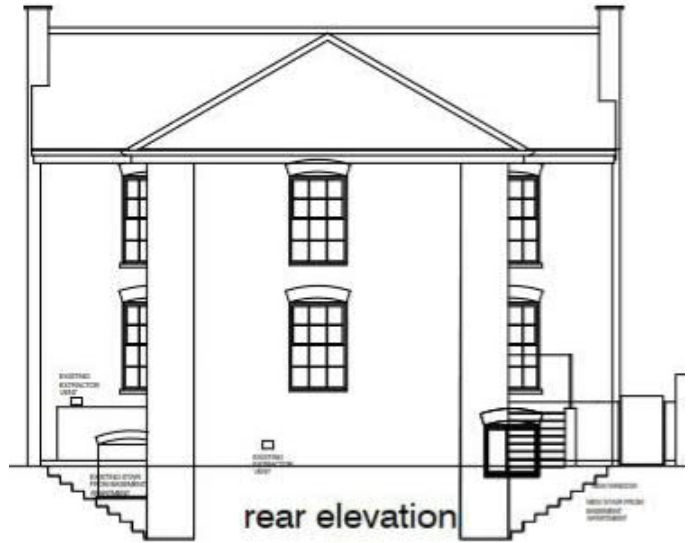


Image 48b: Proposed Rear Elevation



Image 49a: Existing Side (West) Elevation



Image 49b: Proposed Side (West) Elevation

The proposed windows to the west side elevation (refer to Images 49a and b) and the east side elevation (Images 50a and b), similarly as per the rear elevation, take their architectural detail design cues from the existing windows, and are located discretely.

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

4.8 All the proposed windows would be of painted timber construction as appropriate to a listed building (cntd) ing within a conservation area.

The windows would enable the Basement floor to become habitable and are not considered to harm the special interest of the building or the conservation area as identified in Section 3.0.

Impact upon the heritage significance of the heritage assets: No harm



Image 50a: Existing Side (East) Elevation

Image 50b: Proposed Side (East) Elevation

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The review of the proposed works has demonstrated to cause either 'no harm' or have a 'positive' impact upon the historic significance of Whitley Villa and the Christchurch Conservation Area.
- 5.2 The proposed change of use would enable the building to revert more closely to its original purpose as dwelling use when constructed.
- 5.3 With respect to achieving a planning balance, the financial investment into the alterations that enable three floors to become habitable as three separate flats, the property can be effectively developed for the wider benefit of the building, the site and the conservation area.
- 5.4 The sensitive proposals allow the property to evolve and manage change effectively, in accordance to Historic England's Conservation Principle 4.2.

6.0 METHODOLOGY

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

1) Site visit

Whitley Villa was visited on the 07.05.2025 and recorded with photographs.

2) On-line research

The Historic Environment Record was consulted to identify relevant information.

3) Design review with the applicant and project architect to discuss mitigation measures made to the submitted pre-app plans which has resulted in the planform being largely retained.

4) In-person pre-app meeting with planning and conservation officer 04.06.2025 to discuss the findings of the heritage assessment (Chapters 1-3) and the proposals.

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