



Progress Update and Achievements
Year to 31 December 2021

1. SUMMARY

1.1 Reading CAAC continues to progress its primary objective of updating the appraisals for Reading's conservation areas. Our comments on planning applications that have heritage impact are also an important contribution to the conservation and enhancement of Reading's heritage.

1.2 Reading's High Streets Heritage Action Zone project (HSHAZ) has been unexpectedly resource intensive for us this year. We are involved with a wide range of initiatives arising from the project. The programme continues until 2024.

1.3 In relation to planning policy, we were very pleased that the heritage views assessment we produced some years back during the New Local Plan process has now been published on Reading Borough Council's (RBC) planning policy web page. We welcomed the draft Shopfronts Supplementary Planning Document and commented extensively during the consultation phase. The document was approved at RBC's policy committee on 17 January.

1.4 2021 has been a positive year for additions to the local list with the approval of two nominations using the new procedure which involves wider consultation and additions to the list agreed at RBC planning applications committee. [Attwell's drinking fountain](#) on the Thames Promenade and the [Huntley & Palmers \(King's Road\) Garden](#) were both added to the list on 1 December 2021 and [85-88 Broad Street](#) on 12 January 2022.

1.5 At the beginning of 2021 we set up a Twitter account @caacreading and a website readingcaac.org.

1.6 Covid-19 prevented us carrying out community consultations and continues to prevent our meetings at the Civic Offices but we have held virtual meetings using Microsoft Teams.

2. CONSERVATION AREA (CA) APPRAISALS

2.1 At the beginning of 2021 we were reviewing the appraisals of the Market Place/London Street and St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Areas. Our draft re-appraisal for the [Market Place/London Street CA](#) has been published on our website. The St Mary's Butts/Castle Street review was not as far

advanced. Due to an overlap with the HSHAZ project and the Historic Area Assessment (HAA) which is part of that our work has now paused pending the publication of that document.

2.2 A review of the Christchurch Conservation Area (CA) in south Reading is progressing. This small compact CA is a cause for concern for us and residents as some of the properties, including listed properties are becoming dilapidated and are poorly maintained.

2.3 Some progress was made earlier in the year when CAAC members were able to walk around the Eldon Square CA with the RBC Conservation and Urban Design Officer but our current resource constraints mean that the review has stalled.

2.4 At our October meeting we reviewed progress against the management plan included within the St Peter's Conservation Area Appraisal. The management plan was in two parts. The first included general issues for all CAs and the second was specific to St Peters. It was agreed that this could only be taken forward by CAAC, councillors and officers working together and a meeting to initiate and prioritise these activities is anticipated in the near future.

3. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

3.1 RBC planning department consult us on any planning applications within CAs or affecting listed buildings in the Borough. We also review the lists of planning applications for others which are of interest. We are unable to comment on every proposal on which we are consulted and prioritise those that are of particular concern to our members or where we think we can make a difference.

3.2 The applications we commented on during 2021 are listed below. Where the application is marked (*) we were supportive of the proposal. Applications marked (**) had some positive features but improvements were required which meant that we could not support it as it stood.

- 200142 109b Oxford Road – undecided
- 201081 Dukesbridge House – undecided
- 201275 Dellwood Community Hospital – withdrawn (see 211728 below)
- 201585 109a Oxford Road - undecided
- 201586 109a Oxford Road (signage) - undecided
- 201650 111a Watlington Street (amended plans) - refused
- 201828 108 Southampton Street - withdrawn
- 201851 Dog Fountain, St Laurence's Church – withdrawn (restoration in progress)
- 201876 Blewgarth, The Warren – granted with revised plans
- 210146 11 Addington Road(*) - granted
- 210163 Bristol & West Arcade(**) - granted
- 210308 Land adjacent to 45 Redlands Road(**) - granted
- 210323 Redlands Road windows replacement - withdrawn
- 210413 & 210414 27-33 Christchurch Road - undecided
- 210714 Abbey School Playing Field – undecided
- 211241 88 Broad Street - undecided
- 211385 & 211386 Belle Vue House, 2 Tilehurst Road - undecided
- 211416 4 Downshire Square - undecided
- 211553 86-87a Broad Street - undecided
- 211728 Dellwood Community Hospital(*) – undecided

Tree felling in a Conservation Area

- 211384 Trees at Holy Trinity, Oxford Road - refused
- 211512 Willow at the Canoe Club, The Warren – allowed

3.3 In March we participated in the Drews (71-73 Caversham Road) appeal hearing ([3263270](#)). The appeal against Reading Borough Council's refusal of the application (191792) which would have resulted in the demolition of the locally listed building which was the former Dowson's maltings was dismissed. Other appeals decided during the year where we submitted comments were 4 Downshire Square ([3261092](#)) and 13 Kendrick Road ([3265679](#)) which are both on conservation areas.

4. HIGH STREETS HERITAGE ACTION ZONES (HSHAZ)

4.1 The four year [HSHAZ project](#) based on RBC's successful funding application in 2019 continues. Activities have been impacted by COVID-19 but to a lesser extent than in 2020. We are represented on the project steering group by vice-chair Richard Bennett who also represents Reading Civic Society.

4.2 A consortium of consultants Archway Heritage, Built Heritage and Ultranyx were appointed in 2021 to carry out a Historic Area Assessment (HAA) for most of the town centre area within the IDR. The team have held three 'workshops' with CAAC and have been mainly interested in our views on proposed conservation area boundaries within this area. We have reviewed and commented on iterations of the draft report. The final report was due on 31 July 2021 but remains unpublished.

4.3 Sarah Goad, community engagement and cultural officer for the project, left at the end of July and has been replaced by Hannah Dix. CAAC members attended workshops organised to support the pilot cultural programme on Oxford Road.

4.4 CAAC members wrote two two-part [blogs for Reading Museum's website](#) on the history of St Mary's Butts/Castle Street and Market Place/London Street CAs. These were published in February, April and May 2021.

- Time Travel on London Street [Part 1](#) & [Part 2](#)
- Castle Street and St Mary's Butts: a short walk through time [Part 1](#) & [Part 2](#)

4.5 We have engaged with Historic England (HE) who are reviewing their listings in Reading town centre. We sent them the listing errors that we discovered in our reviews of Market Place/London Street and St Mary's Butts/Castle Street CAs. Corrections are required because of spelling errors, significant changes since the building was first listed and that the building had been demolished. Towards the end of the year we were consulted on two major revisions to listing entries for the Palmer Memorial Building on West Street and St Mary's, Castle Street. We expect this support to the HSHAZ project and HE to be ongoing for the next two years.

6. PLANNING POLICY

6.1 The [Assessment of Significant Views with Heritage Interest](#) produced by CAAC in 2018 as part of the Local Plan process has now been published on RBC's planning policy pages. Although the nine views in the document are listed in the New Local Plan the full importance and sensitivity to change that we described was not always appreciated by developers.

6.2 We welcomed and commented on the draft Design Guide for Shopfronts SPD during the consultation period in late summer. The document was approved at the [RBC policy committee on 17 January](#). A full list of responses to our and others' comments were included with papers for the meeting.

6.3 During 2020 we commented on the draft Design Guide to House Extensions SPD. This was adopted at the [RBC Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport committee on 15 March 2021](#). A full list of responses to comments was included with papers for the meeting.

7. LOCAL LISTINGS

7.1 At the beginning of 2020 we came up with a quick first list of buildings and features in Reading that should be considered for local listing. Two of those were Attwell's drinking fountain and the Huntley & Palmers Garden which were added to the list in December. 85-88 Broad Street submitted during 2021 was added on 12 January 2022.

7.2 During the year we submitted other local listing nominations which are now being processed by RBC using the new local listing procedure.

7.3 We are consulted and comment on local listings submitted by others and work with RBC's Conservation and Urban Design Officer, Bruce Edgar on this.

7.4 There is now an online form for submission of local listing nominations. We suggested some improvements, particularly being able to save as you go rather than submitting the listing in one sitting, and it is now much more user friendly.

7.5 At the end of 2020 we commented on Historic England's draft updated Advice note 7 on Local Heritage Listing. The revised guidance ([2nd edition](#)) was issued on 27 January 2021.

8. SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE

8.1 At the beginning of January 2021 we set up a Twitter account @caacreading which has been very helpful in communicating with other Twitter users in the heritage world.

8.2 Our website readingcaac.org contains 'about' information including our Terms of Reference, information on our CA review progress, a resources page and occasional news blog updates.

8.3 We hope that an online presence will increase our visibility and ability to engage with the town of Reading and beyond.

9. OTHER LOCAL HERITAGE MATTERS

9.1 We are very pleased that the whole of the Harris Arcade is now covered by two national listings. The listing for 15 Friar Street ([1114386](#)) was considerably enhanced to make specific mention of units 1 & 26 of the Arcade. The Station Road entrance and units 2-25 are included in a new listing ([1473816](#)). Reading CAAC provided information and images to support this review of the Harris Arcade listing following on from our earlier work to nominate the arcade for local listing in 2020.

9.2 Although we were not involved in the case, we were interested to see that The Hexagon was refused listing in September 2021 and the reasons can be seen on the [Heritage Gateway](#).

9.3 The Coopers in Market Place at last received some welcome attention this year after a long period of neglect although the property is not yet in use.

9.4 Reading's heritage would be incomplete without its trees, green spaces and parks which complement the built heritage. We are pleased to report that the trees that were run over in a car accident on St Peters Hill during 2021 have been replaced by RBC parks department.

9.5 A second round of bidding for Reading Gaol has now ended and the Ministry of Justice is considering the offers. We support the local 'Save Reading Gaol' campaign.

9.6 RBC asked CAAC and Reading Civic Society (RCS) for assistance in reviewing the list of public art and memorials and their condition. RCS have co-ordinated the exercise with input from CAAC members and interim updates have been submitted.

10. PRIORITIES FOR 2022

10.1 2021 has been a difficult year for Reading CAAC. HSHAZ has been very resource intensive for us. It has also disrupted the progress that we were making on town centre appraisals which are on hold at least until the HAA report is delivered. We are hopeful an early meeting with councillors and officers before the end of February to set priorities for the next few years and progress the St Peters CA Management Plan.

Evelyn Williams
CAAC Chair
24 January 2022