



Progress Update and Achievements
1 January 2024 to 31 March 2025

This report covers the calendar year 2024 and the three month period 1 January to 31 March 2025. This aligns our reporting year end with that of Reading Borough Council.

1. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

1.1 Reading CAAC continues to progress its primary objective of updating the appraisals for Reading's conservation areas. The revised Christchurch Church Conservation Area Appraisal was adopted by Reading Borough Council in November 2024. The informal public consultation on the draft revised Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal was launched on 24 March 2025 and will run for 6 weeks until the 6 May.

1.2 Consideration of planning applications that have heritage impact also represents a significant part of our role in the conservation and enhancement of Reading's heritage. We commented on planning applications/listed building consents/advertising consents for 17 (2023 – 24) buildings or sites in 2024 and 3 in 2025.

1.3 Reading's High Streets Heritage Action Zone project (HSHAZ) has now concluded. Historic England's [Evaluation Report](#) of the nationwide HSHAZ programme was published on 17 March 2025. Reading Borough Council noted [their own evaluation](#) at the Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee meeting on 11 March 2025. We produced our own end project report in August 2024. Finally in March 2025 we published our HSHAZ walk leaflet, produced in collaboration with Reading Civic Society with HSHAZ funding.

1.4 We did not submit any (2023 – *three*) nominations for additions to Reading's [List of Locally Important Buildings](#) during this period but commented on two applications submitted by others.

1.5 We met on seven occasions during 2024/25.

1.6 In May 2024 we were very pleased to welcome five new CAAC members.

1.7 We are grateful for the support that we receive from Reading Borough Council, the Conservation Officer, planning and other officers in furthering our objectives.

2. CONSERVATION AREA (CA) APPRAISALS

2.1 The revised Christchurch Conservation Area (CA) appraisal with a significant boundary extension was approved for statutory public consultation by Reading Borough Council's Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee (SEPT) in March 2024 and approved by the same committee in November.

2.2 The Eldon Square CA appraisal review has reached the informal public consultation stage. A six week consultation was launched on Monday 24 March.

2.3 A review of The Mount CA has begun and CAAC have decided to pick up the review of the two town centre appraisals, Market Place/London Street and St Mary's Butts/Castle Hill, parked because of the Historic Area Appraisal, undertaken as part of the HSHAZ.

2.4 Reading has 15 CAs. Since the foundation of CAAC, updated appraisal reviews have been adopted by RBC for three: St Peter's, Russell Street/Castle Hill/Oxford Road and Christchurch. Eight appraisal reviews have not started.

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 other proposals 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 2022 and 2023 which remained undecided as at the time of writing last year's report as well as those we commented on during 2024/25 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.

2022

- 220409 & 220410 Caversham Park – granted subject to legal agreement 26 June 2024
- 220922 71-73 Caversham Road (Drews) – granted 22 March 2024

2023

- 210639 Eaton Court – refused 4 July 2024
- 220933 35-39 Friar Street (updated plans) – permitted subject to legal agreement 4 September 2024
- 221364 Central Club, London Street – approved with conditions 4 October 2024
- 221880 23-24 Market Place – permitted subject to legal agreement 15 March 2024
- 221916 & 221917 Oracle (redevelopment of Debenhams/Vue cinema blocks) – undecided. Commented on amended plans in 2024/25.
- 230107 & 230108 10 Gun Street – approved with conditions 20 February 2025
- 230319 & 230320 101 Oxford Road – granted 15 October 2024
- 230454 20 Belle Vue Road – refused 1 June 2023 and appeal made
- 230640 & 230641 33 London Street – undecided & disposed
- 231139 185a Oxford Road (**) – permitted subject to legal agreement 26 January 2024
- 231257 2-4 Church Street, Caversham (**) – undecided
- 231423 advertising on Broad Street - refused

- 231431 & 231432 101 Oxford Road (**) – withdrawn

2024

- PL/23/0822 King's Meadow View outline permission - undecided
- PL/24/0136 141 Oxford Road LBC for 1-2 Hampden Place mural (*) – granted
- PL/24/0170 Brewdog 11 Castle Street rectification of damage to façade (**) – granted
- PL/24/0173 Broad St Mall – partial demolition and building of residential towers – undecided
- PL/24/0595 5 Anstey Road – dormers at rear – revised plans granted
- PL/24/0604 Aldridges 90-91 Friar Street – residential conversion – refused
- PL/24/0656 & PL/24/0657 – 144 Southampton Street – refurbishment and conversion to HMO – refused
- PL/24/0661 – Folk House, Church Street – replacement windows – refused
- PL/24/0824 – 145 The Warren – extension to existing building (NIL impact on listed The Shanty) – refused
- PL/24/0874 & PL/24/0875 – 33 Baker Street refurbishment of listed building (**) –
- PL/24/0940 – Jacobs Jewellers 25 King Street – (retrospective) works to shopfront and fascia board) (**) – refused
- PL/24/1083 – 11 Glebe Road – new property in front garden and conversion of house to flats – refused
- PL/24/1155 – John Lewis Depot – demolition and construction of flats – undecided
- PL/24/1213 – The Horn public house, St Mary's Butts – conversion of upper floor to residential (**) –
- PL/24/0718 – 2 Northcourt Avenue – extension to side and rear – undecided
- PL/24/1353 – 7 Blagrove Street – extension of hotel to rear and above – refused
- PL/24/1553 – 73 Russell Street – conversion of hotel to HMO – refused

January to March 2025

- PL/25/0312 & PL/25/0313 – 144 Southampton Street – refurbishment – undecided
- PL/25/0338 – Drews 71-73 Caversham Road, documentation of building – undecided
- PL/24/1694 – Change of use of former Whitley Library - undecided

4. HIGH STREETS HERITAGE ACTION ZONES (HSHAZ)

4.1 The HSHAZ project ended on 31 March 2024 but some works were only finalised later that year. We were able to record that the project had allowed progress to be made on the actions in the Russell Street/Castle Hill/Oxford Road CA appraisal management plan.

4.2 In March 2025 we published a leaflet with a walking route around the properties and monuments improved as part of the HSHAZ. This was produced in collaboration with Reading Civic Society with funding from the project.

4.3 During 2024 a mural was painted on the Russell Street elevation of 141 Oxford Road in the style of the early twentieth century 'Bonny & King' sign. The preparatory work for the mural which included investigation for any remains of the sign was carried out by Cliveden Conservation and the design and painting by Momo Signs. It received a gold award in the traditional sign category of the 2025 Sign and Wrap awards.

5. PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

5.1 In February 2025 we commented on the draft Town Centre Public Realm Strategy.

6. LOCAL LISTINGS

6.1 We did not submit any local listing nominations in 2024/25 (3 2023) but commented on two nominations by others:

- Hemdean House School & Lodge (added to local list in April 2025)
- 2 Mill Green (added to local list in April 2025)

7. CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL TRAINING

7.1 Reading's Conservation Officer delivered in October, a one day conservation area appraisal training course to CAAC members. It was also attended by the Heritage Champion and some councillors on the planning applications committee and planning officers.

7.2 From the materials supplied on this course, including survey sheets, we are developing a Reading Toolkit and our own appraisal methodology which complies with Historic England conservation area appraisal guidance. This will be more practical and relevant to our needs the work we undertake on appraisal reviews than the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit or the Deal Society's toolkit.

7.3 The survey sheets were used in finalising the details on the Eldon Square appraisal review and will be used on The Mount appraisal review.

7.4 We are very grateful to the Conservation Officer and the RBC planning department for providing this training which is the first formal training available to CAAC members since initial training in 2016. It was especially important for new members. Some members have existing professional expertise or have undertaken relevant courses and study in order to equip themselves to play their part on the committee.

8. OTHER ACTIVITIES

8.1 We continue to have positive conversations with Reading's Economic and Development Agency ([REDA](#)) on the need for heritage and craft skills training in Reading which could also contribute to green skills to address the climate emergency. We have drafted a report on heritage skills needs in Reading and are preparing a questionnaire to be completed by those needing and supplying heritage skills for historic or heritage buildings.

8.2 In November 2024 we attended an [update briefing](#) on the Ziran Foundation's plans for Reading Gaol, to be renamed the ReCentre.

8.3 We attend and contribute to Reading Art & Heritage Forum.

9. PRIORITIES FOR 2025/26

9.1 To complete the CA appraisal review for The Mount, expedite the review of less complex CA appraisals to be agreed with RBC and make progress on the two town centre CA appraisal reviews.

9.2 To continue to champion Reading's Heritage and play our part in the cultural life of the town, collaborating with residents' groups and other organisations and working with Reading Borough Council.

Evelyn Williams
Reading CAAC Chair
22 April 2025