

DELEGATED HOUSEHOLDER APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Redlands

App Ref: 221802/HOU

Address: 11 Victoria Street, Reading, RG1 4NQ

Proposals: Insert new first floor window in front elevation

Case Officer: Ryan Allen

Applicant: Mr & Mrs Holloway

Date received (valid from): 1 December 2022 **Target Decision date:** 10 February 2023

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

Site visit date: 05/12/22

The application site is a two-storey terrace dwellinghouse, located on Victoria Street, Reading. Victoria Street is characterised by terrace houses either side, all with a consistent pattern of character and design. The building itself is not listed, but it does fall within the Eldon Square conservation area.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning permission is sought for the installation of a new first floor window to the front elevation. The reason behind the application is as stated in the heritage statement submitted: *'...to make provision for a fire escape egress to the first floor.'*

Plans considered:

Received 01/12/22

Heritage Statement

Window Brochure

Drawing No: PL/01 - Existing & Proposed - dated 11/22

Received 26/01/23

Fire Risk Assessment

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None.

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following addresses were consulted by letter.

9 Victoria Street, Reading, RG1 4NQ

13 Victoria Street, Reading, RG1 4NQ

Letters of representation have been received as follows:

None.

Other Consultees

CAAC

Comments received noted the Fire Risk Assessment quoted in the Heritage Statement provided which stated: *'All 1st floor inner bedrooms required to travel through access rooms (lounge and or kitchen) to reach a final place of safety. Existing front bedroom window egress not suitable as it drops to the basement level and other H&S hazards exist. Further egress from the 1st floor is not available as all other rooms are habitable and lockable. Therefore, one recommendation is to provide alternative egress at first floor level'*. Noting that 'one' recommendation was the inclusion of the window proposed and that other options were strongly suggested to be explored.

Equality Act 2010:

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7 (Design and the Public Realm)

EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment)

EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas)

SPG/SPD

Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal

6. APPRAISAL

Character and Appearance

Policy H9 states that an extension to a house will be acceptable where it respects the character of the house in terms of scale, location, materials and design and respects the character and pattern of neighbouring properties and the street as a whole in terms of scale, location, materials and design, and any important existing building line. Policy CC7 also sets out relevant considerations for design.

Policy EN1 of the Reading Borough Council Local Plan (2019) states: *Conservation Areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.* As such, the prevailing pattern of the terrace properties on Victoria Street is the sole first floor window to the front of the property. Although it is acknowledged that the majority of the windows in question aren't original, the aforementioned pattern remains.

The proposal seeks to introduce an additional first floor window to the front elevation, to be sited above the existing front door. This would disrupt the well-established pattern of single first floor windows to the terrace properties and cause significant detrimental harm to the character of the appearance of the host dwelling and wider conservation area.

It is acknowledged that the submitted Fire Risk Assessment has established that sufficient egress from the first floor of the property does not exist due to the current first floor window being situated above a basement well. However, it is noted that further recommendations were provided to resolve this issue such as the introduction of a '*...fire protected corridor to the base of stairs avoiding & reducing lounge room.*' It is considered that the proposal has failed to demonstrate the necessity of the proposal and it appears that options to solve the fire safety issues that do not cause harm to the Conservation Area exist.

Overall, the proposal is in conflict with policies CC7, EN1 & EN3 of the Reading Borough Council Local Plan (2019).

7. CONCLUSION

The proposed development has been assessed as set out above and is considered to be unacceptable for the reasons set out below.

8. RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE

Refusal Reasons:

1. By virtue of its placement to the front elevation, the additional first-floor window would disrupt the prevailing streetscene pattern and therefore cause significant detrimental harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and wider Conservation Area. The proposal is therefore of poor design which is contrary with policies CC7, EN1 & EN3 of the Reading Borough Council Local Plan (2019).