

March 2022

2C Coley Avenue, Reading, RG1 6LG

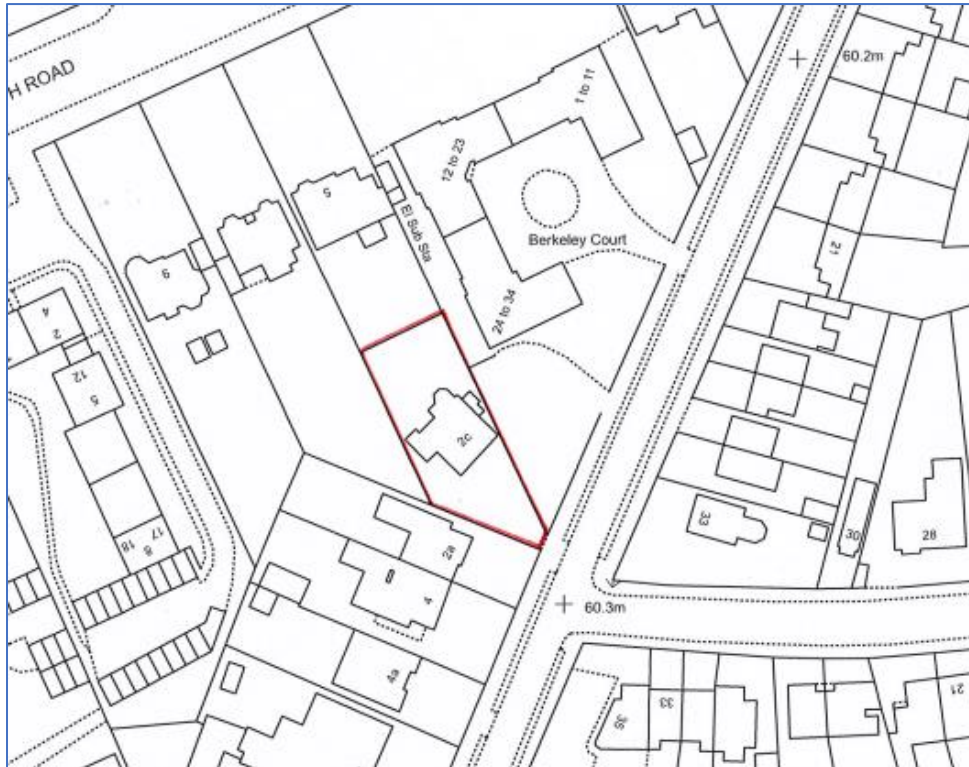
Heritage Impact Statement

for the erection of a single storey rear extension

Introduction;

This statement relates to a proposal to provide a link attached single storey rear extension to an existing detached property known as no. 2C Coley Avenue, Reading, RG1 6LG.

The property and its curtilage are identified on the plan below.



This property is a modern (1980's) detached house located to the west side of Coley Avenue. The building itself is a of face brick and tile whose principal elevation faces east towards the Avenue.

The plot is rectangular with a narrowing towards its private driveway and direct access off coley Avenue which serves a tarmac front drive for parking and turning.



Developed in the late 20th century as an 'infill', the property is not statutorily listed, is not listed as a 'building of local merit' and it does not lie within close proximity of any such buildings. The site does not contain any trees covered by a tree preservation order.

It does however fall within Character Area 6.5 of the Russel Street / Castle Hill Conservation Area.

The Current Proposal:

The current proposal seeks to erect a single storey rear extension within the confines of the property's rear garden with a low pitch flat roof and clad elevations with a lightweight link to the existing rear elevation.

The existing modern conservatory would be removed to make way for the new addition. The extension has been specifically designed to offer a degree of privacy for the occupiers of no.2c from the windows of flats adjacent which presently look over their rear garden.

The photographs below show this inter-relationship which the application seeks to improve upon.

There are no changes or impacts upon the street scene view of the property or site access, and the front elevation to Coley Avenue also remains entirely unaffected.

Policy and determining Issues.

Whilst the property is not listed or considered to be of local merit it nonetheless does lie within 'Character Area 6.5' of the Conservation Area.

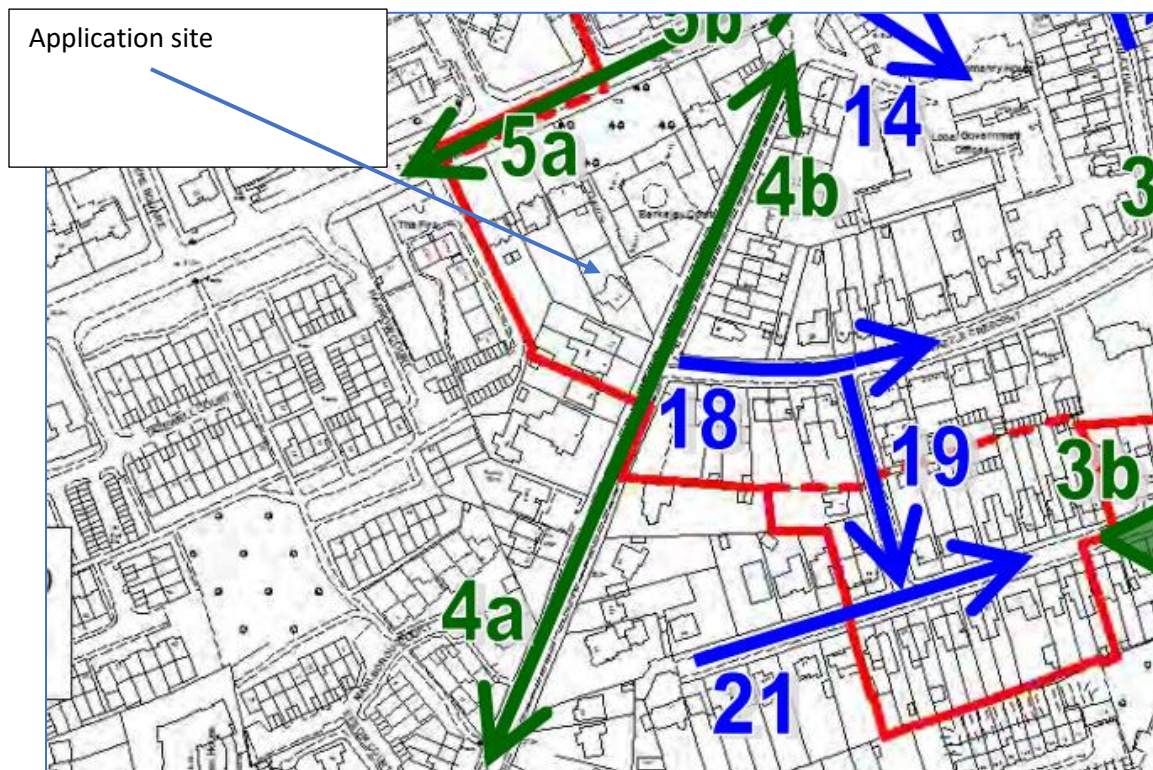
New developments are allowed within such areas and within Conservation Areas generally but require that special consideration be given to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the designated area.

The site does lie within the urban settlement boundary of Reading where there does exist a presumption in favour of development subject to compliance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) objectives and the relevant saved Local Planning Policies.

The Conservation Area Appraisal does not merit the application site with any specific designation or other specific reference.

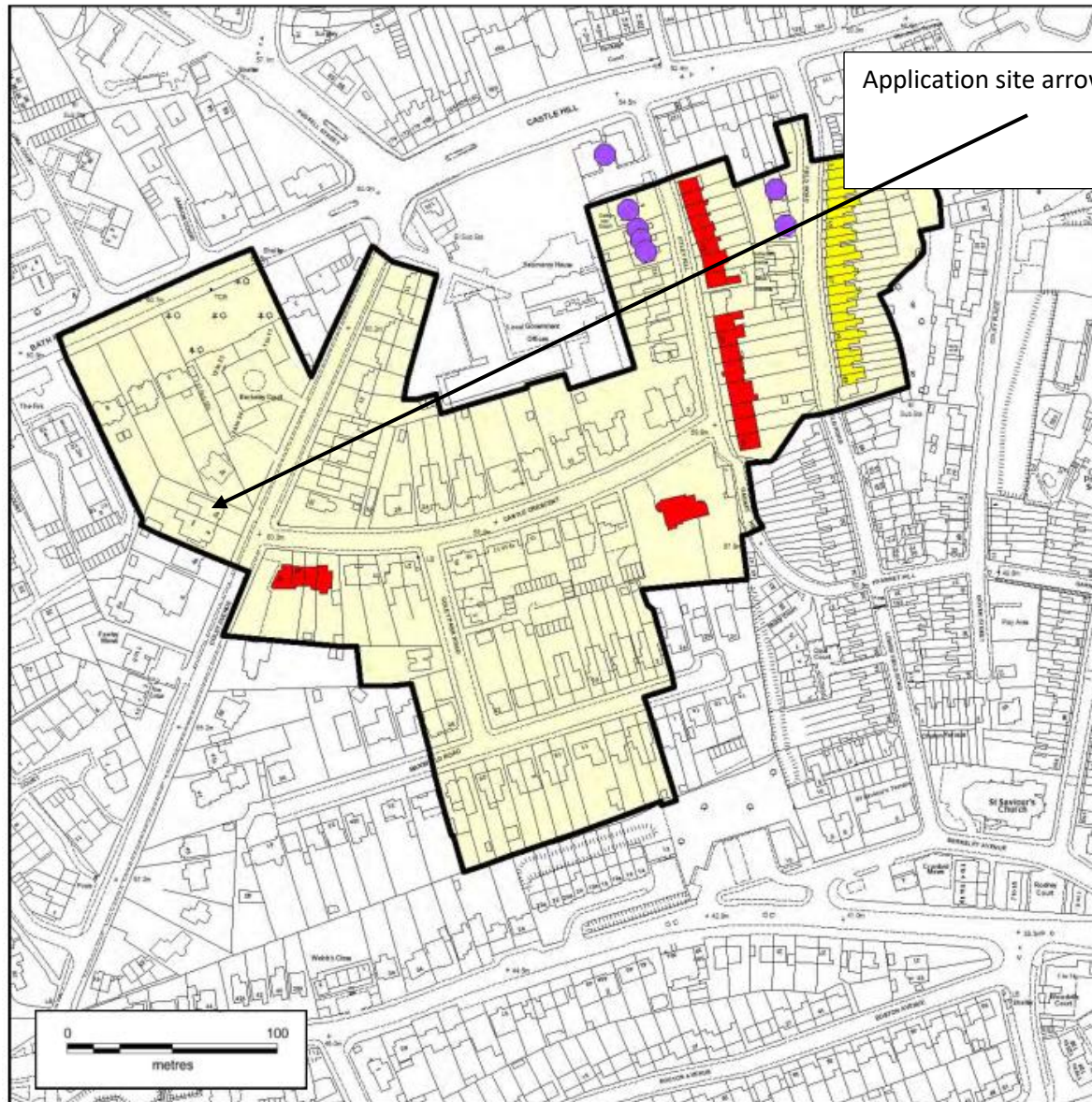
There are no 'Important Views or TPO Trees' within / toward the Property but there is one recognised 'Important View' corridor along the Avenue. See plan extract below.

This view, along with the character of the area as contributed by the street frontages will be entirely unaffected by the subject proposal which remains hidden from public realm views.



The Conservation Appraisal states that; “View 4A and B, to both the north and south along Coley Avenue, into and out of the Conservation Area, is now a protected heritage view in the new Local Plan. The avenue once formed the private drive to Coley House and the Coley Park Estate and exhibits the same line of trees along the route as shown on the Coates’ map of 1802 and as photographed by Henry Fox Talbot (see Figure 4.2.8 page 29). The current trees along the route were planted in 1905 and replaced the same historical allée of trees”

Character Areas: Castle Crescent and streets south of Castle Hill



Impact Assessment

The extent of the proposed work is not significant enough to be classified as a 'notifiable' set of works that requires the assessment of the proposals by Historic England.

The proposals do not involve the loss or removal of any designated features of notable 'Historic' significance or interest.

The existing frontage of this modern property that is the only 'public realm' view from within the Conservation Area is entirely unaffected by the subject proposal.

The proposal uses contemporary design and materials but is considered sympathetic to the existing host building with an appropriate massing and scale.

Such alterations and additions are now commonplace within suburban areas and help to give the host properties a usability and functionality that accords with modern day expectations and which, in hand with this can bring sustainability gains in terms of energy use and together provide a secure and viable future as modest family homes.

In this instance, in relation to 'harm' therefore, the proposal provides an opportunity to create a much improved family orientated accommodation improving the flexibility and functionality of the host property whilst causing no harm to the character and fabric of the existing house or in this case the wider conservation area.

The Government's overarching planning policy framework (NPPF) provides a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It makes it clear (paragraph 14) that for decision taking (on applications for planning permission) this means:

- *approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay;*
- *where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*
 - i. *any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or*
 - ii. *specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.*

The presumption is that planning permission should be granted unless there are good reasons in an up- to-date plan to resist such.

Of key importance here also is guidance supporting the NPPF which goes on to confirm that where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development

The NPPF does however seek to protect heritage assets and 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.

The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.

In considering applications for works to non-listed heritage assets therefore, the Local Planning Authority must consider the effect of an application on the significance of the asset weighing applications in a balanced judgement having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

The NPPF advises that 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.

In this connection, the Council have Local Plan policy EN1 which relates to Conservation Areas and also seeks to ensure that proposals conserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

It states that;

EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. This will include: • Listed Buildings; • Conservation Areas; • Scheduled Monuments; • Historic parks and gardens; and • Other features with local or national significance, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and assets on the Local List.

All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located.

Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits. Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings.

Applications which affect, or have the potential to affect, the significant features of heritage assets should be justified by a Heritage Statement.

In this case the only affected Heritage Asset is the Conservation Area.

With regard to the above policy intent there will nonetheless always remain development opportunities within such locations and where materials and local details are fully understood and respected then it is possible to take an informed and creative approach, and to ensure that the quality of new building work will complement both its host building and its neighbours whether it is of contemporary or more traditional design, or a combination of both.

Historic England advice confirms that designating a conservation area should not be seen as an end in itself: *“we live in a changing world and for the historic environment to survive and continue to be cherished it needs to be positively managed”*. National planning policy advice and English Heritage place greater emphasis on the need to take a holistic and proactive approach to managing change within conservation areas.

In this case the heritage asset can be said to be of relatively low significance or ‘weight’ given the age, design and materials of the host building, the lack of recognised, listed or noteworthy features in the vicinity of the proposed development and the small scale of the proposed works.

The new addition will not be prominent or visible from the public realm and will not alter the established character of this part of Coley Hill.

In the light of this, it is contended that those practical improvements presented by the new addition and resultant lack of significant harm to any interest of acknowledged importance caused is sufficient to allow for the development to proceed.

This in turn will thus preserve and enhance the characteristics of the conservation area in the vicinity of the application site.

CONCLUSION;

The proposals have been designed to respect the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and grounds and will have no adverse impact upon the character or quality of the property itself or the wider Conservation Area or street scene generally in accordance with Government planning guidance and the retained policies of the adopted Local Plan as outlined above.

The proposal is to use contemporary design and materials and remains of a size, scale and arrangement that is appropriate to the host building commensurate with its plot size and configuration and which is not at odds with the prevailing characteristics of the immediate surrounding area.

The proposal addresses NPPF guidance which requires that LPA's set a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment ...in a manner appropriate to their significance, putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation and the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring.

The proposal has considered the available evidence and has assessed the impact of the proposed works upon the only heritage asset affected -in this case the Conservation Area.

The design avoids conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and the identifiable need to improve the appearance and functionality of the existing property.

For all of these reasons we look forward to the support of the Local Planning Authority.

