
Land between 32 and 34 Eastern Avenue, Reading

HERITAGE STATEMENT

TITLE
Heritage Statement

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- 1.1 This report has been prepared to accompany a Planning Application for the proposed new development at land between 32 and 34 Eastern Avenue, in Reading.
- 1.2 This document should be read in conjunction with the Design and Access Statement, and drawings prepared by SA Associates.
- 1.3 This document provides an analysis of the application site and its setting, its historical development, the significance it holds, and then assesses the potential visual impact that proposed development may have on the identified heritage assets.
- 1.4 The adopted methodology applied in the report is a synthesis of the visual inspection and evaluation of the site based on professional experience and a review of literature and primary and secondary sources, including local, national archives and other sources and includes study of the historic maps, as well as plans of the site development.
- 1.5 The proposals include provision of an additional storey to the existing modern residential development.

2.0 PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 Where any development may affect designated or undesignated heritage assets, there is a legislative framework to ensure proposed works are developed and considered with due regard for their impact on the historic built environment. This section of the statement summarise relevant national and local policy and guidance.
- 2.1 Relevant planning policy to be considered is as follows:
- The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
 - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), February 2019
 - National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG), March 2014
 - Historic England's Good Practice Advice in Planning Notes (2015):
 1. The Historic Environment in Local Plans
 2. Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment
 3. The Setting of Heritage Assets
 - Further Guidance by Historic England has been adopted in February 2016:
 1. Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal, and Management Historic England (Advice Note 1)
 2. Making Changes to Heritage Assets Historic England (Advice Note 2)

LOCAL PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE:

- 2.3 Reading Local Plan (November 2019) and the relevant policies, EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment), EN2: Areas of Archaeological Significance, EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas, EN4: Locally Important Heritage Assets, EN5: Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest, EN6: New Development in a Historic Context,

3.0 SITE CONTEXT



Figure 1 – The Aerial View of the application site and its context

- 3.1 The application site consists of three garages, located between Nos 32 and 34 Eastern Avenue, on northern side of the road, near its eastern end. In terms of wider context, Eastern Avenue is a road in East Reading, which starts from Wokingham Road and runs westwards terminating at the junction with Upper Redlands Road and Whiteknights Road.
- 3.2 The application site has no statutory listed buildings, or locally listed building, however it is located within the South Park Conservation Area (Fig 2).



Figure 2 – South Park Conservation Area Map (Reading Borough Council)



Figure 3 – The location of the application site within the South Park CA, marked with red circle.

SOUTH PARK CONSERVATION AREA

- 3.3 **Designation:** South Park Conservation Area was formally designated on 28 April 1988, following production of the initial planning brief for a wider area, whose full title was "South Park: A Planning Policy to Protect the Physical Character of a Victorian Suburb". dated January 1976.
- 3.4 **Key Features:** South Park CA Appraisal (2008), describes the character and the special interest of the area as follows:

"The Conservation Area is, generally speaking, a fully built up urban area composed of continuous frontages of two and three-storey buildings with front gardens to the back of pavement edge, albeit with a prevalence of large properties on large plots, allowing significant tree cover within plots. There are no areas of public open space within the Conservation Area itself, but the nearby Palmer Park is available to residents for informal and formal recreation. The presence of many fairly substantial properties in commensurately large grounds, typically bounded brick walls and railings and containing significant tree cover, provide a good setting for individual properties and the character of the Conservation Area as a whole."

and lists following as a key features:

- "a significant number and mix of large Victorian and Edwardian detached, semi-detached and terraced houses in spacious plots with mature trees and well stocked gardens;
- a large variety of interesting and often unique design features to many of these buildings, and in particular intricate and decorative brick and tile work;
- plot frontages defined by brick walls and or railings (although some have been removed to allow frontage parking);"

3.5 **Detail:** "The Conservation Area is essentially a Victorian/Edwardian residential suburb of Reading, which retains its historical character and special architectural interest. With the exception of a few stucco buildings, the buildings in the Conservation area are generally of brick, which is one of the distinguishing features of Reading's architecture. Brick was a popular building material in the nineteenth century and the ready availability of different coloured bricks provided the opportunity for the lively polychromatic brickwork found throughout this part of Victorian/Edwardian Reading. The town had several brickworks, the most notable being S & E Collier Ltd at Water Road and Elgar Road and two brick works in the Tilehurst area."

3.6 **Views and vistas:** "Views to the south [...] encompass the slopes up past houses to the wooded "ridge" of Whiteknights Road beyond. Views out of the area to the east and west along Crescent Road are unattractive, but views in to the area along Crescent Road encompass important "Townscape" and corner buildings referred to on the Appraisal Map. Views out of the area to the north are directly on to the busy main Wokingham Road and the wall and railings of Reading Cemetery beyond. Views into the area from the north are marred by buildings immediately outside the Conservation Area. The best views are therefore to be seen within the Conservation Area along broad sweeps of fine Victorian and Edwardian houses. There are a number of individual buildings which stand out within the Conservation Area, with corner buildings tending to be particularly prominent in the street scene, although often not visible from any distance."



Figure 4 - Map of Reading, 1611 by John Speed

4.0 HISTORIC BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Reading was at the beginning a Saxon settlement, originally called *Reada Ingas*, which means the people of *Reada*. *Reada* was a Saxon leader who settled in the area with his tribe in the 6th century. The early settlement was probably in the area of St Mary's Butts, which was called Old Street in the Middle Ages.
- 4.2 The settlement developed near the two rivers (River Thames and River Kennet), which made it well placed to transport goods to and from the Thames Valley and London by a river. In 871, Reading was captured by Danes, who created fortification to the east, between the Thames and the Kennet. At the time of the Domesday Book (1086), Reading had a population of about 600 people.

- 4.3 The prosperity of Reading was greatly increased by the foundation of Reading Abbey in 1121, by Henry I. The foundation of the abbey, one of the largest and richest monasteries of medieval England, triggered growth of the town, which became an important trading and ecclesiastical centre, with strong royal connections.
- 4.4 By 1525, Reading was the largest town in Berkshire, with different trades flourishing: like cloth making and associated trades like weavers, dyers, and tailors. There were also many vintners (wine merchants). Leather industry developed, and there were many tanners, shoemakers, hat makers, and similar artisans and small businesses developing. Boat building was also an important trade. There were also several goldsmiths in Reading. There were also carpenters, blacksmiths, stonemasons, butchers, bakers and millers.

- 4.5 After the dissolution of monasteries, in 1538, the Reading Abbey was closed and Henry VIII granted the town independence. The merchants were allowed to form a town council and the members were given the right to elect the mayor and other officials. The Grey Friars church was turned into a town hall and the Abbey became the private house, which at one point belonged to Duke of Somerset (given to him by his nephew Edward VI).
- 4.6 Although the town suffered from the closure of the abbey, as there were no more pilgrims, it soon recovered and the clothing industry continued to prosper, as did leather and other industries. By 17th century, Reading wool industry slowly went into decline, to be replaced by others – like pin, wire, and nail making. In 1636 the first makers of tobacco pipes are mentioned and from 1640, silk making started. Another important industry in Reading was brick making and tile making. The prosperity of Reading was halted due to the civil war between king and parliament, which started in 1642 as well as due to the Revolution of 1688, with that revolution's only significant military action fought on the streets of the town. However, the 18th century saw Reading recovered and the beginning of a major iron works, as well as the growth of the brewing trade for which Reading was to become famous. The 19th century saw the coming of the Great Western Railway and the development of the town's brewing, baking and seed growing businesses. During that period, the town grew rapidly as a manufacturing centre.



Figure 5 – 1840 Reading Map. The application site has not yet been developed (approximate location indicated by the red circle).

- 4.7 Reading grew rapidly and expanded to the East and West. In 1802 Reading dispensary opened in Chain Street, with the Royal Berkshire hospital opened in 1839. The first cemetery opened in 1843. A Public Board of Health was established in 1850. The board dug sewers across the town. They also replaced the slaughterhouses in the town centre with ones by a new cattle market in Great Knollys Street. There were many other improvements in Victorian Reading. In 1862 Forbury was laid out as a formal garden and new municipal buildings opened in 1876, the public library opened in Reading in 1884, the art school opened in 1860 and the science school opened in 1870. In 1882 these two schools merged. Meanwhile in 1877 Kendrick boys and girls schools opened. In 1889 the boundaries of Reading were enlarged. Horse drawn trams began running in Reading in 1879, which were replaced with electric trams 1903. The last trams in Reading ran in 1939, being replaced by buses.



Figure 6 – 1913 Map of Reading shows significant increase of development from 1840s.

- 4.8 In 1909 Reading gained its first cinemas. In 1911 the boundaries were extended again to include Caversham and Tilehurst with the first council houses were built in Shinfield Road by 1920s. Reading University opened in 1926. An aerodrome opened in Woodley in 1931. Reading suffered during the WWI, from air raids.

- 4.9 Post war period saw residential developments, including council housing, like St Michaels estate, extension to the existing Whitley estate, Emmer Green and others. Commercial development also continued, with Broad Street Mall opening in 1971, as well as Friars Walk shopping centre. A new Central Library was built in 1985. Reading got their new railway station in 1989.
- 4.10 Today, Reading is a major commercial and educational centre – being home to the University of Reading and other commercial institutions and businesses with the population of over 200,000 inhabitants.

5.0 Land between 32 and 34 Eastern Avenue

- 5.1 The application site comprises three garages sitting against the fences of the rear of the houses in Granby Gardens (nos 41, 43, 45 and 47) and between Nos 32 and 34 Eastern Avenue. The view of the Granby Gardens houses is, mainly hidden by the large trees in their gardens.



Figure 7 – Street view of the application site



Figure 8 – Modern Map with application site marked with the red circle.

The context of the application site is family houses along the Eastern Avenue. Currently the land is used for parking of vehicles. There are no statutory listed buildings in the immediate vicinity of the application site. Nonetheless, the area contains a wide variety of house types and architectural styles from the Victorian and Edwardian periods, many of which retain their original character, mainly concentrated in the middle part of Eastern Avenue, between Wokingham Road and Crescent Road and the east side of Eastern Avenue around the Crescent Road junction;

There has been little new development within the area, with few new "infill" houses (No 3A Eastern Avenue).



Property adjoining application site to the west – No 34 Eastern Avenue



View of the property adjoining application site to the west – No 32 Eastern Avenue



View of the property adjoining application site to the east – No 32 Eastern Avenue



View of No 7 Eastern Avenue – property located opposite of the application site



Aerial view of the northern side of the Eastern Avenue elevation, with the application site outlined with red square



Aerial view of the southern side of the Eastern Avenue elevation, with the application site outlined with red square

7.0 TOWNSCAPE CONSIDERATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

7.1 This section deals with the 'significance' of the relevant heritage assets, analysing values recognised heritage assets may hold. In this instance and as identified by the CAA, the heritage asset considered is South Park Conservation area, and the individual houses situated within the area.

7.2 NPPF points out that "significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting". It defines "setting of a heritage asset" 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."

7.3 The methodology used to assess significance follows methods prescribed by Historic England "Conservation Principles, Policies, and Guidelines, 2008" (CPPG), which recommends testing of various "heritage values." These values are listed as: evidential, historical, aesthetic, and communal.

- Evidential Value – relating to the potential of a place to yield primary evidence about past human activity;
- Historical Value – relating to ways in which the present can be connected through a place to past people, events and aspects of life;
- Aesthetic Value – relating to the ways in which people derive sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place;
- Communal Value – relating to the meanings of place for the people who relate to it, and whose collective experience or memory it holds

7.4 The Evidential, Historic, Aesthetic, and Communal Value of the application site

The application site is a land between Nos 32 and 34 Eastern Avenue which comprises only modern garages of utilitarian form, **with no actual value**.

Immediate neighbouring houses No 32 and 34 Eastern Avenue are not considered to have any particular values and are not statutory or locally listed.

7.5 Relevant Heritage assets summary:

On the norther side of the Eastern Avenue, Nos 36, 38 40, 42, 44 46 are all Buildings of Townscape Merit and are described as follows in the South Park CA Appraisal:

- **36 Eastern Avenue:** "Late Victorian detached. Gabled roof. Corbelled eaves. Stripped (red/white) rubbed arches with marbled keystones. Highly decorated and ornate main entrance archway with original ironwork in front of first floor windows over."

- **38 Eastern Avenue:** Red brick detached Victorian villa. Classic style. Mix of gabled/hipped roofs. South facing elevation with interesting projecting bays and classical treatment of gable end. Pediment possibly a later addition. Stone lintels. Carved keystones. Original front porch and trellis. Classical entrance steps and urns.

- **40 Eastern Avenue:** "Pilgrims". Pre 1899. Rendered flanks but main wall a mix of cream, red and grey brick patterning. One and a half storey front bay with lead roof and decorative eaves. Latter matching main eaves. Modern first floor casements.

- **42 Eastern Avenue:** Red and grey brick "Waterhouse" style. Slate roof, gabled ends. Half dormer projecting gables at front. Decorative barge boards to eaves and gable ends. Ground floor projecting bays in red brick with lancet parapet.

- **44-46 Eastern Avenue:** Pre 1875 semis. Grey and cream brick. Moulded string course. Gabled slate roof spoilt by 1950s dormer. Interesting decorative bracketed supports to main eaves. Distinctive round headed windows at first floor and ground floor projecting bays with crenelated tops. Recessed porch entrances. Original doors and fanlights.

On the southern side of Eastern Avenue, following heritage assets are part of the immediate setting of the application site:

- **Nos 13 and 15 Eastern Avenue** are locally listed and described in CAA as "Luther and Burnett Cottages dated 1871. Unique mix of Gothic and Romanesque inspired stonework details of a high quality"

- **Nos 19-21 Eastern Avenue:** "Pair but of classical proportions and with good stone detailing. Carved decorative barge boards to gable ends.

- **29-31 Eastern Avenue, is Listed Grade II.** "It is 1840s stucco villa with slate roof. Faces south (i.e. not to road). Rusticated quoins. 3 bays, cross glazed and plate glass windows with hood moulds, outer tri-partite. Parapet. Projecting box porch with rounded corners and pierced parapet. Porch door half glazed with sop chamfered reveals. 4 panel door with glazed side panels and lozenge glazing to rectangular overlight."

7.6 The application site is located on the land on the opposite side of the identified heritage assets locally listed houses Nos 13 & 15, and is within view of each other. The listed building and the subject site are not within view of each other, partly because of the way the road bends and because the listed building is hidden behind the other houses on the street. Equally, direct views between the application site and other locally listed buildings on the street on the northern side, are obscured.

- 8.1 It is proposed to build new family house, on the land between No 32 and 34 Eastern Avenue. The new house will replace the existing garages and will utilize to the optimum the available land plot.
- 8.2 The pre-application consultation with the council was submitted in 2019. The scheme has been revised, in order to meet Reading Council's recommendations.
- 8.3 The proposed house is designed to match the local character of the surrounding properties, using similar architectural vocabulary, material, and treatment of the architectural detailing – the windows, doors, roof as well as finishes. In terms of height, the roof ridge of the proposed house will match the neighbouring properties, and in such way will be in keeping with the streetscene, and overall character of the Conservation Area.



Figure 9 – Proposed Elevation for the application site

- 8.4 The proposed design has been influenced by the architectural style in the vicinity of the application site – for example No 3A Eastern Avenue (Fig 10).



Figure 10 – No 3A Eastern Avenue - recently built family house

Visual Impact



Figure 11 – Map showing locally listed and listed buildings – and the vicinity of the application site marked in red circle. The locally listed buildings are marked in blue, and listed in red.

- 8.5 The views of the subject site within the setting of the CA are of local importance and are only available from the limited number of vantage points on the Eastern Avenue (figs 12-15).



Figure 12 - View towards the application site taken in front of No 13 – 15 Eastern Avenue

- 8.6 The application site cannot be seen from any other parts of the Conservation Area and no long views of the subject site are available. In the context of new proposals, it is considered that the degree of the appreciation of the Conservation Area as a whole will not be substantially changed or affected.



Figure 14 - View towards application site, taken in front of No 34 Eastern Avenue



Figure 13 – View towards the application site taken in front of No 13 Eastern Avenue



Figure 15 – View towards the application site taken in front of 32 Eastern Avenue

THE PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990

- 9.1 The proposed scheme takes into account the local character and architectural detail ensuring that the special character of the South Park Conservation Area is preserved. The analysis of the local views, show that there will be very little visibility between the proposed house and the existing locally listed buildings in the vicinity, and that there is no direct views between the proposed house and the listed building.

In this way, it is considered that the proposed building does not lead to harm to the significance of the conservation area as a whole and so it complies with Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

THE NPPF - DISCUSSION

- 9.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27 March 2012, revised in 2018 and again in February 2019. It is the principal document that outlines Government's planning policies for England and how / when these should be applied by the Local Planning Authorities (LPAs). When determining Planning Applications the NPPF directs LPAs to apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development sympathetic to the conservation of designated heritage assets. *"These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations."*

- 9.3 With reference to NPPF Para 189-202

- As recommended by NPPF, an assessment of the significance of the application site and the relevant heritage assets has been provided as part of the application. It is believed that the assessment is proportionate to the importance of the heritage assets being considered. The assessment in this statement, have informed the design process, as well as, provided a sufficient level of information required to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the significance of the relevant heritage assets.
- The overall impact of the proposed development upon the setting of South Park Conservation Area and relevant heritage assets in the vicinity of the application site is minor and beneficial as it will replace existing unsightly garages.
- "Conservation" is defined in the NPPF as: *"the process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance."*

- The design has been informed by analysis of the locally listed buildings, their setting, and the special interest of the Conservation Area. The proposal has been carefully considered ensuring that the significance of relevant heritage assets is sustained.
- The applicant has appointed conservation consultants with an established reputation in dealing with a range of high quality conservation projects and who were involved in the design and conservation work in all its phases. It is considered that by analysing the history of the subject site and the area, its character and context, as well as appraising the significance of the relevant heritage assets, this statement provides sufficient information for the planning authority to assess the potential impact of the proposed development on the special historic and architectural interest of the heritage assets.
- The proposed works will enhance the quality of the existing Eastern Avenue streetscape, whilst preserving the status and setting of the Conservation Area as a whole.
- The proposals will provide residential use of the site and the area. The impact of the proposals will cause no harm to the setting of other heritage assets in the vicinity.
- Public benefits of these proposals are implementation of a appropriate quality design sympathetic to its context.

NPPG GUIDANCE - DISCUSSION

- 9.4 With reference to NPPG Paragraphs 003, 009,015, 017, 019 and 020:

- The proposals understand and accept that conservation of the heritage asset must be executed in a way that is appropriate to their significance. It is also acknowledged that heritage assets are irreplaceable. Embedded in the proposed works is understanding of the term 'conservation' being the *'active process of maintenance and managing change'*.
- It is considered that the importance of the significance of the relevant heritage assets and their setting has been properly assessed and has provided information necessary to develop an acceptable proposal.
- The applicant wishes to build new family home in place of the garages on the land plot located between two detached buildings. The visual impact on the significance of South Park Conservation Area and relevant heritage assets has been assessed as minor and beneficial and will be balanced by the public benefit of enhancing the streetscape maintaining and securing the optimum viable use of this land plot, whilst compatible with the significance of the identified heritage assets and their setting.

RELEVANT LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

9.5 In reference to Reading Local Plan 2019 and policies EN1, EN3, EN4 and EN5:

- The design rationale is founded on the thorough analysis and understanding of the context of the existing application site. Currently it comprises garages set back from the street line, and hard surfaced area in front. The garages have no significance and are detrimental to the overall special interest of the South Park Conservation Area.
- The proposed development, with its appearance, scale and architectural quality will make positive contribution and will enhance the significance of the conservation area as well as locally listed buildings and their setting. The proposed scheme will have no harmful effect on the listed building in the vicinity of the application site.
- The streetscene and the local distinctiveness will be improved, and there will be clear public benefit of providing optimum use for this land plot. The potential impact of the proposed development has been assessed and is considered to be minor and beneficial.
- The proposed development is situated at the northern end of the Eastern Avenue, and does not fall within any of the significant views identified by the Local Plan. In regards to the local views within the South Park Conservation area – the application site and new development will be shielded from long views, due to the road gently curving and so the ability to have full views along the street is interrupted. Instead the views along Eastern Avenue are experienced in short sequences, as one walks through.
- It is considered that the proposed house will improve the way this part of the Eastern Avenue is visually experienced, both individually and within the South Park Conservation Area, as a whole.

9.6 South Park Conservation Area

- Proposed new dwelling is designed to a similar scale, massing, and building line to existing buildings in the street.
- The proposed use of traditional materials (brick), as well as treatment of windows, entrance door, architectural detailing, and roof covering will be in keeping with the "Victorian/Edwardian" style of the South Park Conservation area. In this way, the character and the scale of the proposed new dwelling house respects the appearance and local distinctiveness of the South Park Conservation Area.

10.1 This report has appraised the impact of proposed development within South Park conservation area.

10.2 The proposed new dwelling will replace existing garages of no architectural, historic or aesthetic merit, whilst respecting exacting conservation standards and character and appearance of the South Park Conservation Area.

10.3 The visual impact will be minor and beneficial, improving existing views, causing no harm to identified heritage assets (in this case South Park Conservation Area as a whole, as well as individual locally listed buildings and statutory listed buildings). The special character of these heritage assets will not be undermined by the proposed scheme.

10.4 The implication of existence of impact does not immediately translate that into "harm." It is considered that the proposal does not cause any harm to the Conservation Area as a whole, but on the contrary it enhances the area.

10.5 It is considered that the proposed extension complies with the National and Local policies and guidance for urban design and the historic built environment.

Thank you for viewing our Heritage Statement.

If you have any queries or would like to discuss anything further with us please don't hesitate to get in contact.

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