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**1 JESSE TERRACE**  
**READING**  
**RG1 7RS**

**PLANNING AND HERITAGE STATEMENT**

Day Tanner Ltd  
3 Thames Court  
2 Richfield Avenue  
Reading  
RG1 8EQ

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## 1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This statement accompanies our householder planning application for the demolition of part single storey, part two storey rear extension and replacement with two storey and single storey rear extension at 1 Jesse Terrace.
- 1.2 The site lies within the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area with the map accompanying the conservation area appraisal identifying the subject building, as well as many others in the area, as a Building of Townscape Merit. An Article 4 Direction is also in place over nos. 1 – 35 Jesse Terrace removing permitted development rights.
- 1.3 No. 1 Jesse Terrace is of different proportions to the row of terraces it is attached to, being set down from the main roof of the terrace making it of two storey scale rather than the three storeys of the terrace. It is also set slightly forward of the terrace and is double the width of the adjoining property to the south. The site is a corner plot with Baker Street to the north. The building is of red brick construction with a painted render front façade and render corner detail to mimic ashlar blocks, with timber sash windows under a concrete tiled roof.
- 1.4 The Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area Appraisal was published in April 2004 and was reviewed in 2017, though this appears to be only in draft form at this time. Both documents refer to retained original features along Jesse Terrace including the sloping roofed verandahs with cast iron supports and the front setbacks with mature planting to the front gardens. The 2017 document also refers to views walking east along Baker Street noting, when crossing Russell Street and heading *“towards the historical bend in Baker Street”, the “charming cottage-like detached 2 storey house at no. 14 Baker Street and the two imposing, listed semi-detached houses at 33 – 39 form a pretty picture with no. 1 Jesse Terrace and its noted high brick curtilage wall beyond”*.
- 1.5 The extensions proposed here are considered to be appropriate with regard to local plan policy on house extensions and respectful of the historic context of development in the area where it would maintain noted important features whilst providing a more contemporary internal layout and floorspace. It is now

important however to set out the proposals and describe the context within which they would sit.

## **2. THE SITE CONTEXT**

2.1 The site is within the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area (the CA), located to the west of the town centre and separated from the centre by the Inner Distribution Road. As with many buildings in the CA, no. 1 Jesse Terrace is identified as a Building of Townscape Merit but it is not nationally or locally listed.

2.2 Development in the area tends to be of well defined blocks of terraced houses of generally 2 and 3-storey scale set close to the back edge of the pavement with small setback areas to the front. The CA document notes Jesse terrace as breaking somewhat with that character where the houses are set further back from the pavement providing larger front gardens with mature vegetation.

2.3 The 2017 draft CA document, as well as referring to the view walking east along Baker Street set out above, also refers to the view along Jesse Terrace, noting *“the neat symmetry of matching terraced houses on either side with their sloping roofed verandahs and imposing size behind set-back gardens provides rare glimpse of green in the area. It provides a restful space for the eye in the large green void that makes up the majority of the surrounding streets”*.

2.4 The 2017 draft CA document further sets out that:

*The very attractive houses of Jesse Terrace were the vision of the local Jesse family, and were started c. 1850, built in groups of four or so at a time. These were a grander sized house than the slightly earlier homes to the streets north and the charming veranda front porches with their concave metal roofs provide the range with a unifying detail that sets the street apart. The houses front gardens, with their Victorian tile front pathways are well taken care of and within Reading, they remain a rather unique example of a unified Victorian street built for the wealthier businessman.*

2.5 As noted previously, no. 1 Jesse Terrace has different proportions to the row of adjacent terraces and can be seen in the local context as quite distinct. Certainly no. 1 does not continue the symmetry of the adjacent terraces and does not have a verandah to the front. It does have a well maintained setback

area to the front and tile path but none of those features would be disturbed as part of this scheme and neither would the brick curtilage wall referred to in paragraph 1.4 above.

- 2.6 Section 7.4 of the 2004 CA document refers to materials stating that the predominant material is red brick and that the use of Welsh slate for roofing is universal, though it is noted *regrettably* that the slate has been replaced in places using modern concrete tiles or artificial slate.
- 2.7 The site is covered by an Article 4 Direction which seeks to ensure the preservation of unique architectural features and traditional materials by requiring an application for planning permission to be made for most works that may otherwise have enjoyed permitted development rights.
- 2.8 It is clear from available literature that some parts of the CA are at serious risk from development and changes of use from family houses to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO). The loss of many original windows and front gardens used for bin storage have started to degrade the public realm but the terraces along Jesse Terrace retain much original fabric and are largely retained as family houses in contrast to the somewhat shabby appearance of other roads in the CA.
- 2.9 The objectives of the Article 4 Direction in preserving unique architectural features and traditional materials are acknowledged here as an important development control tool that allows our historic environment to be read through the years. However, that is not to say that our streets should somehow be museums without evolution where extensions to houses gives flexibility to the boroughs housing stock and allows houses to cope with changing circumstances.
- 2.10 Whilst it is acknowledged that some small scale householder development proposals can cause harm to the character of an area, and indeed to the amenities of adjacent users, provided they are well designed and respectful of the area in which they located they can also sit comfortably as appropriate additions to the area. The following sections in this statement set out the development proposed and assess that against the development plan for the area.

### **3. PROPOSALS**

- 3.1 The scheme effectively proposes a two storey flat roof extension made up of one projecting element and linking/ following existing flat roof element and a single storey flat roof rear extension with a skylight. Existing first floor windows would be re-used in the extension and it is also proposed to remove the existing concrete tiles and re-roof in slate. A new first floor side window is also proposed.
- 3.2 The projecting first floor element would be of flat roof construction and following existing roof line and would sit under the existing ridge. Ground floor flat roof extension would be in line with rear wall of neighboring property with a small gap and would not affect it in any way.
- 3.3 The extensions would enable a larger living room/ orangery with garden access together with a direct access to garden from existing kitchen and a WC/ Utility on the ground floor and with an enlarged family bathroom at first floor.
- 3.4 There are no changes proposed to the important front elevation and the amount of useable external amenity space would not be substantially diminished. The existing side boundary wall would also be retained together with boundary planting. Unusually for a site in such a dense urban location there is access for off-street car parking which can be used for storage during the construction process.
- 3.5 On the face of it, this would appear to be an appropriate scheme for this particular house where it is somewhat distinct in form to other houses in the area and where there appears to be sufficient space around the building to achieve setbacks to the side boundary with retained boundary planting. However, this will need to be determined in light of the development plan for the area.

### **4. DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT**

- 4.1 The Development Plan for the area is made up of national planning guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and the adopted documents forming part of the Local Development Framework particularly, in this case, the adopted Core Strategy (CS) document and the Sites and Detailed

Policies Document (SDPD). The Council's SPG on House Extensions is also current

- 4.2 The NPPF sets out national planning policy relating to the conservation of the historic environment. It advises that in determining planning applications "*local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made to 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*" (paragraph 189).
- 4.3 Specific guidance in the NPPF on the treatment of non-designated heritage assets emphasises the need to understand the significance of a heritage asset in order to determine impacts on the historic environment (paragraph 197). It advises that: '*The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.*
- 4.4 SPDP Policy DM9 relates to house extensions and states that such works will be acceptable where it:
- Respects the character of the house in terms of scale, location, materials and design;
  - 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; and
  - Does not present a large blank façade to public areas.
- 4.5 Policy CS7 (Design and the Public Realm) requires that all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.

- 4.6 Policy CS33 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) compounds national heritage guidance and seeks to ensure that heritage assets within the borough are protected and where appropriate enhanced. The policy states that planning permission *“will only be granted where development has no adverse impact on historic assets and their settings”*.
- 4.7 Policy DM8 (Safeguarding Amenity) seeks to ensure that development does not have a significant detrimental impact on the living environment of existing or new residential properties, in terms of, among other things:
- Privacy and overlooking;
  - Access to sunlight and daylight;
  - Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development.

## **5. POLICY APPRAISAL**

- 5.1 It is acknowledged that the significance of a designated or non-designated heritage asset can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting, in this case the heritage assets concerned are the CA and the Building of Townscape Merit.
- 5.2 Having regard to the special qualities of the CA it would appear from available literature, including the CA Appraisal documents of 2004 and the draft of 2017 that the main features relevant to this application are the *neat symmetry of matching terraced houses on either side of Jesse Terrace with their sloping roofed verandahs and imposing size behind set-back gardens where they remain a rather unique example of a unified Victorian street*.
- 5.3 There are also important views walking east along Baker Street and heading *“towards the historical bend in Baker Street”, where the “charming cottage-like detached 2 storey house at no. 14 Baker Street and the two imposing, listed semi-detached houses at 33 – 39 form a pretty picture with no. 1 Jesse Terrace and its noted high brick curtilage wall beyond”*.
- 5.4 There is also clearly social significance associated with the CA in terms of the early development of Reading and figures associated with that era, such as the Jesse family, but also as a marker of the relative prosperity of the town at that time.

- 5.5 However, our assessment of the scheme proposals against the backdrop of the CA designation suggests that the identified importance of the heritage asset would not be significantly harmed.
- 5.6 In that regard, the proposal does not affect the *unified* streetscene setting along Jesse Terrace where the front elevation of the subject building would not be altered and the existing front setback area would be retained. Views along Jesse Terrace toward Castle Hill would not be affected, and neither would those looking east along Baker Street.
- 5.7 Having regard to the impact on the Building of Merit itself, the proposed extensions would sit below the existing eaves and existing windows at first floor would be re-used in the extension. It is also important to note that the existing concrete roof tiles would be replaced with slate which would benefit the character of the building and the wider CA where the appraisal document acknowledges the loss of original slate tiles as *regrettable*.
- 5.8 It has been noted in this statement that no. 1 Jesse Terrace is quite distinct to other buildings in the row of terraces along Jesse Terrace and extensions to no. 1 would not upset the symmetry of the rear elevations of the adjoining terraced row.
- 5.9 SDPD Policy DM9 requires that house extensions respect the character of the house in terms of scale, location, materials and design and that they respect the character and pattern of neighbouring properties and the street as a whole. This policy also refers to the House Extensions SPD which, in respect of rear extensions, suggests that for terraced housing the acceptability of a rear extension in terms of length and height “*will be derived from the particular circumstances of the application site*”.
- 5.10 In this particular case, it has been noted that the subject property is quite distinct to the adjacent terraced row where it is set down, set slightly forward and is double the width of the terraced properties. The extensions proposed would be further set down below the eaves of the subject property and set behind the existing two storey extension to the adjacent property such that it would not affect light entering that property or views out.

- 5.11 The extensions must surely be considered as subservient to the host dwelling and whilst visible in the streetscene along Baker Street, being set below the existing eaves allows the reading of the adjacent row of terraces and the relationship to remain legible. That there do not appear to be other similar examples in the local area is not considered here to be fatal to this current application as the particular characteristics of the subject property are not necessarily found elsewhere.
- 5.12 As noted previously in this statement, we do not consider that the location of the property within a conservation area should mean that the property should be seen as some museum piece, stuck in time where flexibility in the boroughs housing stock allows properties to cope with changing circumstances. Provided extensions are well designed and respectful of the area in which they are located they can sit comfortably as appropriate additions to the area, as we believe to be the case here.
- 5.13 Certainly the choice of materials to be used is an important factor in the overall design process and we are of the opinion that the use of slate tiles, including in re-roofing the host dwelling, and matching brick work and bonding, together with the re-use of existing windows would maintain and enhance the character of the area in line with the requirements of Policy CS7.
- 5.14 The same is considered true with regard to Policy CS33 but it is also the case that the important views and architectural features identified in the CA appraisal documents would not be harmed by this proposal.
- 5.15 The conservation of heritage assets is clearly in everyone's interests for the sake of current and future generations. However, as noted in Policy DM9, in dense urban areas such as Reading, where there is limited land for new housing, the ability to extend a house provides an alternative to families moving to a larger house where that can act against enabling mixed communities.
- 5.16 We are of the opinion that the scale of harm arising from this proposal is not significant and it is hoped that officers can have due regard to the merits of this proposal in making a balanced judgement.

**6. PLANNING HISTORY**

An application was submitted for a two-storey scheme 01/11/2018 and withdrawn 19/12/2018 due to concerns by the planning officer, which have now been addressed with this new scheme.