

Supporting Statement in respect of Proposed Development at 18 Russell Street, Reading, RG1 7XF.

Proposed Development: Erection of a 2-storey rear extension to comprise a 1-bedroom flat with internal staircase; replacement of windows.

Number 18 is part of a terrace on the western side of Russell Street, expanding from numbers 6 to 22. It has residential accommodation at basement, ground, first and second floor levels comprising 4 one-bedroom flats. It is a Grade-2 listed building and is located within a Conservation Area. The property dates from the early-mid 19th century and is built with red bricks and a slate roof. Other features of the houses within the terrace include dormers and ridge chimneys to the roof, glazing bar sash windows, fanlights and moulded doors. The predominant material is the red brick and the terrace features stucco string courses.

Russell Street / Castle Hill Conservation Area

The Conservation Area is characterized by 18th and 19th century development, originally of prestigious blocks of 3 or 4 storey houses. Many of those were built on the back of the pavement or with short front gardens often enclosed with cast iron railings.

While residential use is still predominate in the area, Russell Street and many of the surrounding roads are characterized by flat conversions. An original feature of the houses in Russell Street was their long back gardens, hidden from public view and backing onto Franklin Street. These have now been developed with 20th century housing.

Negative features which currently detract from the terrace of late Georgian housing include the poor quality of the front gardens, the lack of storage for wheelie bins leading to their being left on the pavement and the loss of original windows.

Proposed Development

Applications for planning permission and listed building consent are being submitted to build the rear extension. The extension would be built using a good quality brick and shallow pitched roof, finished with slates to match the existing building.

The scale, design and appearance of the extension would be very similar to that already built at number 16. A kitchen / diner would be provided on the ground floor and a bedroom and separate bathroom above.

Other improvements are also proposed to the rear elevation of the main building. These include: removing one basement window and repositioning the other to be in line with the windows of the above storeys, all of which will be replaced with new box sash timber windows to match the original and to be more in-keeping with the character of the existing building. In terms of detail, the design of the replacement windows has been chosen to be traditional and to incorporate divisions within the panes to match the existing. An arched window will be lost to accommodate the extension, but overall there will be major improvements to the appearance of the rear of the building.

There will also be improvements to the rear parking and amenity area. It is proposed to define the 3 car parking spaces and to provide a designated pedestrian access. Provision is also made for waste bin storage.

In terms of planning policy, consideration must be had to Policy HSG 8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan which deals with house extensions. Regard must also be had to PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment. Paragraph 3.5 identifies the issues that are generally relevant to the consideration of listed building applications. These include the particular physical features of the building that justify its inclusion on the list, the building's setting and its contribution to the local scene, and the extent to which the proposed works bring benefits including the enhancement of the environment.

In addition, we have also had regard to the terms of Circular DCLG Circular 01/2006. This sets our guidance on changes to the development control system, including guidance on pre-application discussions and information to be contained in a listed building consent statement.

In our design appraisal we have paid special attention to the historic and architectural importance of the building, its special physical features and the buildings setting. The building's features that are mentioned on the listing from the English Heritage include the slate roofs, ridge chimneys and dormers, the glazing bar sash windows and the red brick with stucco bands. Number 18 is clearly valued for the contribution it makes to the terrace and for the group entity. The listing relates to numbers 6 to 22 even. This comprises a terrace of 10 properties on the western side of Russell Street. While the front elevations are very pleasing and generally fairly well maintained, the rear elevations in some cases have been despoiled through poor maintenance and unsympathetic alterations. This mars the overall appearance and the character of the area. The rear elevation of number 18 could be significantly improved to the overall benefit of the Conservation area.

A visual appraisal of the terrace shows that the shallow pitched roofs are a particularly important feature of these listed buildings. This feature has been repeated on certain of the rear extensions that have been added to the terrace, such as the ones at numbers 14 and 16. The shallow pitched roof with hipped end covered with slates is both in-keeping but subservient in scale.

We consider that the current proposal will bring about improvements to the rear elevational treatment of number 18. It will be more sympathetic and will sit comfortably with the original building, in much the same way as the extensions to numbers 14 and 16. The design treatment together with the replacement windows will help preserve and enhance the importance of this listed building. This in turn will lift the building's setting and will improve the appearance and character of the Conservation Area.

In respect of these criteria, we believe that there will be no harm to the intrinsic character of the building. The loss of the arched window to the rear is outweighed by the considerable improvements which will restore and enhance the rear of the building. At present the rear elevation detracts significantly from the setting and terrace. We believe that the proposal will both preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the area.

Effect on neighbouring amenity

The proposed extension would be built on the rear elevation of number 18. It would be approximately 3.3 metres wide and 6 metres deep. A low-pitched roof would be added which would be hipped back. The dimensions and height of this extension are very similar to the existing rear extension at number 16, which is also 2-storey and with a hipped roof. The height of the eaves would be at a similar level with the eaves of the existing extension at number 16

We have assessed the potential impact of the proposed extension to the ground floor window at number 16. The extension will be 4.5 metres away from the centre of the window which is sufficient to maintain outlook and to receive a reasonable level of light.

Conclusion

The proposal as now submitted is of a good design standard and is sympathetic in terms of the impact on the building itself and the neighbouring properties, and on the character of the area in general. The extension to the rear is respectful in terms of proportion, scale, form and height to adjacent buildings. Attention has been paid to the detailing and appropriate materials are to be used. There will be minimal impact on adjoining properties and any effect on the light to number 16 would not be significant enough to cause unacceptable harm to their living conditions. To be weighed against this are the substantial improvements to be made to the fabric of the building which will in turn enhance the setting and character of the Conservation Area. The alterations proposed to this listed building are necessary in order to provide an improved level of facilities. This economic regeneration will help preserve the building, enhance its general appearance and assist with the general maintenance, providing an additional market affordable one-bedroom dwelling, which in design terms matches the adjoining properties.