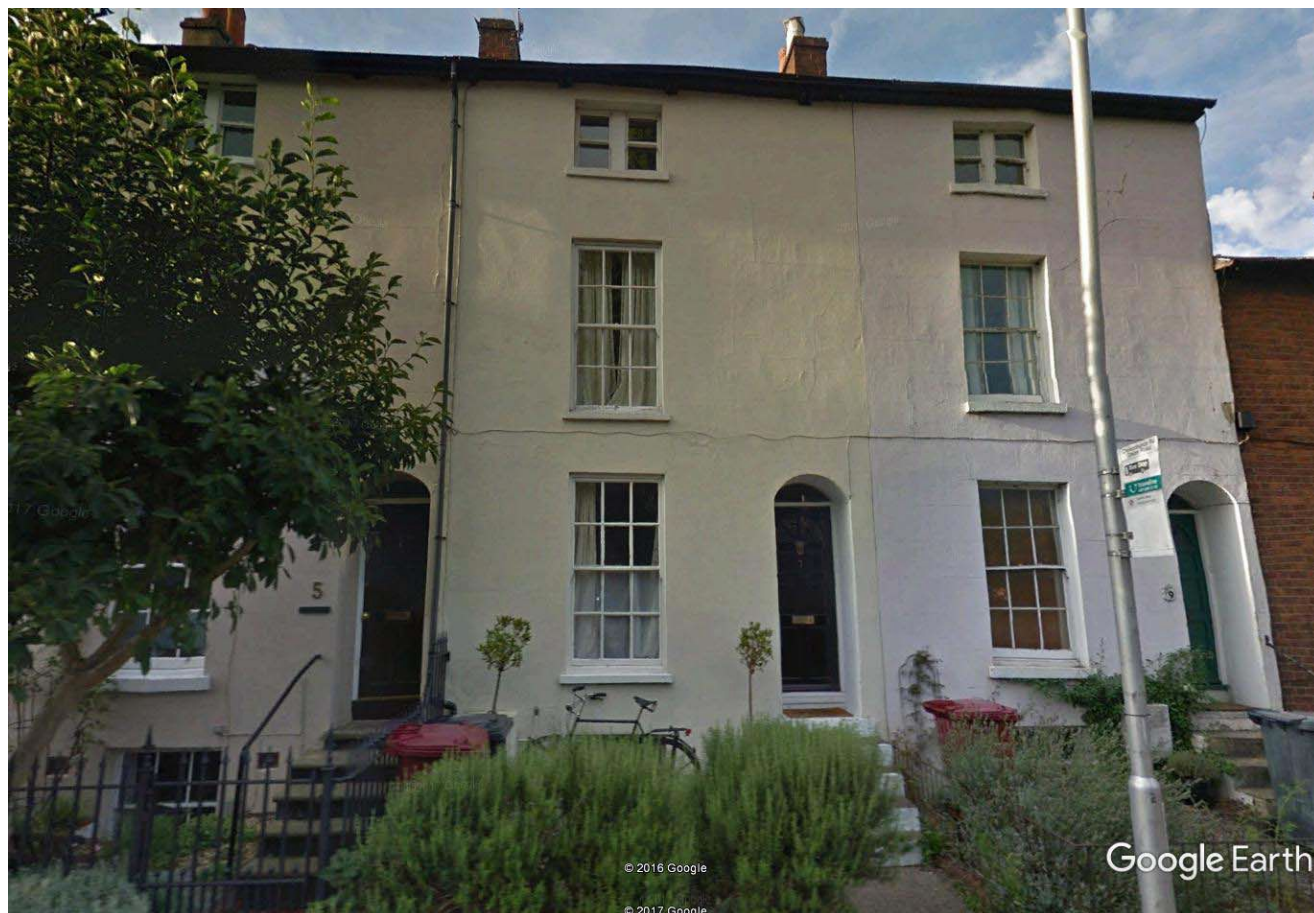


7 Christchurch Road, Reading**Design & Access****Heritage Statement****Introduction**

The accompanying planning and listed building application seeks to replace a single storey rear lean-to structure with a new single storey extension, and allow for replacement double glazed timber sash windows.

The property is grade 2 listed, and forms a group listing, described as 'relating to an asset valued as part of a group in its immediate setting, for example , a house in a terrace of identical buildings'. The Historic England list entry is appended.

Design

The replacement single storey rear lean-to extension has been designed to minimise the impact upon the main terrace, and guided by the listed status of the building. A shallow pitched roof, with a steeper pitched glazed roof section encompassing the sash window to the rear bathroom is proposed, allowing for the original window and opening to remain intact. The glazed roof frame, windows, doors, fascia, and soffit shall be white gloss painted timber, while the walls shall be finished with emulsion painted render, and the roof resembling leadwork, albeit finished with a modern single ply membrane.

Access

The existing entrance door to the front of the property is accessed via a stepped approach, while the rear extension and garden is accessed off a half landing to the staircase. Council policy CS5 'inclusive access' recognises that some existing buildings are constrained by steps, as with this property. Direct garden access shall be maintained via a pair of french doors, replicating the existing arrangement.

Heritage

Setting of the Heritage Asset

7 Christchurch Road and its neighbouring terraces are situated on the north side of Christchurch Road.

Houses on the north side are identified by odd numbers 3 to 33. Number 7 is part of a terrace of three three-storey houses (numbers 3-9) which are listed for group value.

The three terraces were built in the Regency period (1790-1840) on fields in the hamlet of Whitley. The tithe map of 1840 is the earliest map to show all three terraces in place. At this time the land was in the Reading parish of St Giles but just outside the boundary of Reading Borough. The three terraces were known as Whitley Crescent and it was not until 1887 that the area became part of Reading Borough and Whitley Crescent became Christchurch Road.

Christchurch Conservation Area

The terraces are included in the Christchurch Conservation Area, designated in 1987, the area is centred on Christ Church.

The terraces which form 3-33 Christchurch Road are the earliest in the Conservation Area, built before 1849, they predate the grade 11* listed Christ Church by some 20 years and make a positive contribution to its setting.

Impact of the proposal

The single storey rear extension would be modest in scale and not be visible from the wider conservation area. Conservation style hardwood timber double glazed sashes would replicate the detail of the existing windows, preserving the appearance and setting.

Nicholas J Bundy

Woolhampton Design Centre

Christchurch Road, 1910

Christchurch Road, 2017

Architecture of the Heritage Asset

15. The central terrace (11-25) of Whitley Crescent exemplifies a characteristic Regency style of brick (unpainted) with decorative ironwork. In contrast, the front and sides of the three-storey end terraces are stucco-rendered and painted white.
16. The eight two-storey houses present an unbroken line with similar front elevations. The original main walls are of solid brick construction and the roofs are tiled with slates. The houses were built with a two storey rear extension to house the kitchen/scullery. Number 15 has a further, modern single-storey extension of brick-faced cavity construction and with a felt-covered flat roof¹
17. The chimney stack of number 15, which was located on the west side of the house, has been removed. Chimney breasts and sealed fireplaces remain in situ on the west walls of the principle rooms.
18. Although the house had been in multiple occupancy until it was purchased by Ms Kavanagh, number 15 has retained its original plan form (Appendix). The accommodation comprises:
 - Ground floor: hall and stairs, sitting room, dining room, kitchen
 - First floor: landing, bedroom 1, bedroom 2, bathroom
 - Lower ground floor: cellar

19. The brickwork on the front facade of number 15 was carefully constructed with tuck pointing and with fine detailing around the windows and front door.

Historic tuck pointing to the front facade

20. The sitting room, dining room and bedroom 1 retain historic single-glazed, timber framed, eight over eight sash windows.
21. A verandah with art deco style ironwork piers and lead canopy adds decorative interest to the front of number 15, and most of its neighbours. The fashion for verandahs of this style began in England in the 1790s, their popularity growing with the success of the East India Company: people who had enjoyed verandahs in India recreated them when they returned to England. Originally the Whitley Crescent verandah would have run the length of the two-storey terrace, but it was removed from houses 19 and 21 sometime in the 20th century. Canopy panels have been removed from the verandah at the east end of the terrace.

The front facade of no.15 with verandah and sash windows

22. Other differences of styling of the front facades of the terrace houses are noticeable. Of the sixteen sash windows across the terrace, thirteen earlier small pane windows survive, while three have been replaced with large pane sashes more typical of the Edwardian period. Only two houses have retained the original six-panel front door, although the original fanlights above the front doors have survived. Sections of the iron railings and gates to the front of numbers 15-25 have also survived.

Surviving railings and gate

23. At the rear of number 15 the two storeys of the original house extend at half the house width, giving the characteristic L-shape of many period terraced houses, and allowing a window to let light into the rear rooms. The kitchen has been doubled in length by a modern single-storey, flat roofed, extension, mostly of brick but with evidence of a doorway having been infilled with breeze blocks.
24. There are a number of modern windows in the rear elevations of the house. Bedroom 2 has a double glazed timber casement window. The bathroom and the kitchen have single-glazed timber casement windows, both of which are damaged by rot. The cellar has a double-glazed uPVC framed window. The French windows at the end of the kitchen are double-glazed and uPVC framed.

The rear of 15 Christchurch Road, West elevation

The rear of 15 Christchurch Road, north elevation

History of the Heritage Asset

25. The Berkshire Record Office holds documentation relating to the origins of Whitley Crescent, giving an account of how land was made available for good quality houses to meet the needs of Reading's rapidly growing population. Key points are summarised in the following paragraphs.
26. In 1801 Lady Frances Milman of Pinner in Middlesex inherited land in Berkshire.¹⁴¹ Between 1823 and 1825 she granted a number of leases to George Shackel, a Reading businessman who had interests in the brick kilns in what was then Clackman's Fields, just west of the road from Reading to Basingstoke (now Whitley Street).¹⁵¹ He took a 99 year lease on parcels of land on both sides of the road, with undertakings to build on them within the next three to seven years. In June 1823 Shackel leased three plots to build houses on the north side of the main road east towards Shinfield (now Christchurch Road); these plots were situated in open fields outside the boundary of Reading Borough but within the Reading parish of St Giles.
27. The corner plot at the western end of the three plots of land (now the corner of Christchurch Road and Highgrove Street) was probably the first to be built on. Under the lease, in addition to the ground rent of £116s 3d per annum, Shackel had to erect 'one dwelling house of good and appropriate bricks or stone and sound timber of the proper quality, and in a workmanlike manner', worth not less than the rent of £15 a year.¹⁶¹ The single house on this plot is now occupied by a doctors' surgery and is numbered 1 Christchurch Road.
28. The next two plots to the east were leased together in June 1823. Under the terms of the lease Shackel was to pay a ground rent of £24 16s 3d a year for the two plots. Lady Frances Milman undertook to grant further leases to George Shackel or to other responsible persons' for all the land, with the same covenants and provisos. Shackel undertook to build three or more houses on these two plots within seven years, spending at least £3000, and producing receipts for Lady Milman in proof. Each of the houses on the first plot was to be worth not less than £15 a year, and those on the second plot not less than £40 a year. The leasing of these plots was the beginning of a chain of subleases made by George Shackel and a number of other people between 1823 and 1837, which resulted in the building of the row of houses which was called Whitley Crescent and is now odd-numbered 3 to 33 Christchurch Road.
29. The three-storey houses at each end of Whitley Crescent appear to have been built first: a *Report on the Corporation of Reading* by the Commissioners on Municipal Corporations of England and Wales, dated 1833, has an attached plan in which Whitley Crescent is marked as two blocks with a gap between them,¹⁷¹ evidence that the two-storey houses, including 15 Christchurch Road, were built between 1833 and 1840.¹⁸¹

30. Adverts for the rent or sale of the houses give an insight into the internal disposition of rooms. In October 1825 an advertisement in the Berkshire Chronicle announced 'to be let with immediate possession, 4 genteel cottages adjacent to the Borough of Reading in the hamlet of Whitley called Whitley Crescent, situate on an exceedingly healthy spot, commanding one of the finest views in or near the Borough, and supplied by a beautiful Spring of soft water. The Premises consist of two bedrooms, two good attics, back and front parlour, kitchen, wash house, coal and wine cellars, pantry and small garden for the low rent of £20pa. Apply on the premises or of Mr Richard Knight, builder'.
31. In August 1829 the Reading Mercury advertised the sale of '4 recently erected dwelling houses at Whitley Terrace [sic], each comprising two cheerful parlours (communicating with each other by folding doors)'.
32. In November 1829 Richard Knight (the builder) died. His Whitley Crescent property was sold in May 1831 at the George Inn in Reading. There were at least eight lots of varying sizes, which were bought by local gentry and businessmen. In the years up to 1837 these people granted further leases to others including a carpenter, a painter, a plasterer, an estate agent, a lawyer and a shoemaker. By 1840 the entire three part terrace looks to be complete, as shown on the tithe map of 1840.¹⁹¹

Part 2: Significance of the Heritage Asset

33. The significance of 15 Christchurch Road as a heritage asset is judged in terms of its special architectural, historical, group and aesthetic values. It does not have any *significant* artistic or archaeological interest. Its significance is primarily at a local level, rather than regional or national.

Architectural and Historical Significance

34. The Christchurch Conservation Area contains a wide variety of house types and architectural styles of the Regency (1790-1840), Victorian (1837-1901) and Edwardian periods (1890-1914). The majority of dwellings have retained their original character and for the most part have escaped conversion to multiple flats.
35. The architecture of 15 Christchurch Road is significant by virtue of its position in a terrace of Regency houses, and the contribution this terrace makes to the character and visual appeal of the Christchurch Conservation Area. As the *Conservation Area Appraisal* points out, the original distinctive features of the houses have only survived in part: the small pane sash windows, the six panel front doors, the radiating fanlights over the doors, the trellis verandah and the arrow head railings.¹¹⁰¹ It is important that the common features that do remain are not further eroded by changes made to individual houses in the terrace.

36. No.15 has further architectural and historical significance through its surviving historic fabric, particularly on the front facade, as examples of both the classical design intention and traditional craftsmanship. In addition to its sash windows and verandah, the front facade of No.15 retains its historic tuck pointing to the front facade. Tuck pointing was a specialised technique for filling brickwork joints, to create the illusion that the bricks were finer- and more expensive- 'rubbed and gauged' brickwork. Other houses on the terrace have had this traditional brickwork repainted with unsympathetic modern cement mortars which only serves to enhance the significance of the surviving pointing to no.15.
37. The original plan form of the house is largely unchanged, and survives as an example of a typical middle class residence of the period.
38. The history of Whitney Crescent is a significant part of the history of the rapid development and expansion of Reading in the Regency and Victorian periods, in line with increasing industrialisation and the arrival of the train.
39. Important documents giving an insight into this development have survived in the county archive. *The Conservation Area Appraisal* describes the Area as middle class, 'untouched by commerce and industry'.¹¹⁰¹ The census return of 1841 supports this analysis, with the Whitley Crescent houses inhabited mainly by people of independent means, many of them women with a female servant. Other occupants included teachers, a clergyman and a clerk in the Navy. The more detailed census of 1851 records families with young children alongside an accountant, a newspaper reporter, a commercial traveller, a seamstress and a gun maker.
40. A government report of 1833 observed that 'St Giles contains the greatest number of residences belonging to the upper and independent classes. From the circumstances of its affording good sites, it has become a favourite spot for building on ... and there is little doubt that this Parish will in the course of two or three years very much increase in population, wealth and importance.'¹¹¹¹

Group and Aesthetic Significance

41. Individual buildings can be listed for their value as part of a group in their immediate setting rather than for any intrinsic special features of the building itself. In this way its place in the listed terrace gives 15 Christchurch Road its significant group value.
42. From the viewpoint of the Christchurch Conservation Area it is the roadside features of 15 Christchurch Road that are most significant, reflecting its visual relations with the rest of the terrace. As 15 Christchurch Road has retained most of its front facade heritage features, it forms an aesthetically pleasing asset in the street scene and in the wider Christchurch Conservation Area.

Conclusion

43. Although small individual changes have had the cumulative effect of altering the uniformity of the terrace, much of its historic fabric and architectural detailing survives and the original design intention of the architect/builder can be readily interpreted.
44. The primary significance of 15 Christchurch Road is as part of the surviving classical facade of the terrace and its contribution to the wider conservation area. Any proposed works to the building should seek to preserve or enhance this significance.

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Acknowledgements

45. The following sources were used in the preparation of this report. All documents referred to as BRO are archived in the Berkshire Record Office. The assistance of the BRO and Mrs J Kavanagh in the preparation of this report is acknowledged with thanks.

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Appendix: Floorplan

- A. Sitting Room
- B. Dining Room
- C. Kitchen
- D. Bedroom 1
- E. Bedroom 2
- F. Bathroom
- G. Cellar