

DELEGATED HOUSEHOLDER APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Redlands

App Ref: 231862/HOU

Address: 12 St Johns Road, Reading, RG1 4EB

Proposals: Single storey rear extension and solar panels

Case Officer: Sian Hickey

Applicant: Mr Eugene Mohareb

Date received (valid from): 23 December 2023 **Decision date (ext):** 16 May 2024

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site contains a two storey end-of-terrace dwelling on the southern side of St Johns Road and is located within the Eldon Square Conservation Area. The property has an existing single storey gable end projection at the rear with a high sloping roof. The surrounding area is predominantly residential in nature and the surrounding dwellings are mainly terraced properties of a similar character. The property is not a listed building, however, the adjacent property at number 14 St Johns Road is a grade II listed building (List Entry Number: 1156910).

Listing Description:

ST JOHN'S ROAD 1. 5128 No 14 (The Oval) SU 7273 7/234 II 2. Early C19, 2 storey detached villa, a former farmhouse. Red brick with silver grey brick headers. Toothed brick cornice. Wide eaves to low pitched slate roof. A symmetrical 'T'-plan design carefully aligned so that the south end closes the vista along Princes Street from the Reading Hospital with a full height bow (1 window, French casement on ground floor). North front faces down St John's street; 3 bays, glazing bar sash windows and central 6 panel door in recessed arch with fanlight. Garden surrounded by cast iron mushroom capped rails (see George V Memorial Gardens, Eldon Square) on stone plinths; the rails are only to south.



2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning permission is sought for a single storey infill extension at the rear of the property. The proposal also includes 4 solar panels on the rear facing roof slope of the main roof of the dwelling, and 4 solar panels on the roof slope of the existing rear projection. At the front of the property, a timber bike/bin store is proposed along with the reinstatement of the low level front boundary wall.

Plans/documents considered:

Design and Access Statement

Drawing No. 2311 - PP 01 - Location Plan

Drawing No. 2311 - PP 02 - Block Plan

Drawing No. 2311 - PP 04 - Existing Elevations

Drawing No. 2311 - PP 03 - Existing Floor Plans

Drawing No. 2311 - PP 06A - Proposed Elevations

Drawing No. 2311 - PP 05A - Proposed Floor Plans

Drawing No. 2311 - PP 07A - Proposed Rear Elevation

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following addresses were consulted by letter.

10 St Johns Road, Reading, RG1 4EB

14 St Johns Road, Reading, RG1 4EB

Letters of representation have been received as follows: **None**

Natural Environment team - No objections

Conservation Area Advisory Committee - No comments received

Conservation officer - response below:

Relevant policies and legislation

From the point of view of the historic environment, the main statutory tests are set out within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Sections 16(2) and 66 require that ***special regard*** be given to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 also requires the Council to pay ***special attention*** to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of designated Conservation Areas.

National Planning Policy and Guidance

The NPPF outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment. Chapter 16 of the NPPF (2023) 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development.

Paragraph 203 requires local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraph 205 of the NPPF requires that '*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....*' And paragraph 206 says, '*any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration...) should require **clear and convincing justification***'. Paragraph 208 says that '*where a development proposal will lead to less than*

*substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighted against the **public benefits** of the proposal...*

National Planning Practice Guidance on Historic Environment provides context to the NPPF.

Local Planning Policy and Guidance

Policy EN1 ‘Protection and enhancement of the historic environment’ of the Reading Borough Local Plan sets out the Council’s aspirations for the historic environment. The policy requires that all proposals to protect and, where possible, enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. It echoes the NPPF by stating, *“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** are expected not to have an adverse impact on the elements that contribute to their special architectural or historic interest, including **their settings**.

Policy EN3 ‘Enhancement of conservation areas’ of the Reading Borough Local Plan requires that development proposals within Conservation Areas **contribute positively to local character and distinctiveness**. This policy further states *“Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas.”*

Policy EN6 ‘New development in a historic context’ also requires *“New development will make a contribution to the historic character of the area **by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development**. When determining planning applications for new development, the following factors will be taken into consideration:*

- a. **The positive contribution of the development to the existing historic townscape (scale, height, mass, proportion, plot size, street form, materials, significant vistas and views, and open space);***
- b. **Sensitivity to historic context;***
- c. **Reflection of borough-wide major heritage themes that contribute to local distinctiveness (e.g. patterned brickwork or former worker terraced housing);***
- d. **Whether development promotes and/or improves access to previously undiscovered or neglected historic significance.”***

Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal is also a material consideration in determining applications for development.

Other Guidance

Historic England Advice Note 2 - Making changes to Heritage Assets illustrates the application of policies set out in the NPPF in determining applications for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent.

English Heritage’s “Conservation Principles” provides policy and guidance for the “sustainable management of the historic environment”.

Relevant heritage assets

The application relates to a two-storey end-of-terrace property with a single-storey rear extension dating circa the early 19th century. As illustrated below, situated to the south of St John’s Road, within the Eldon Square Conservation Area, the site is adjacent to the Grade II

listed villa, the Oval to the east and lies within the close vicinity/setting of Grade II Listed Church of St John the Evangelist.



The application site (outlined in red), Listed buildings (purple starred), and Conservation Area (light purple)

Significance of heritage assets

The NPPF defines significance as the “*value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest.*”

The interest may be architectural or historic, as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Section 1.

“Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.” (NPPF, 2023)

Historic England assesses significance in a similar manner, referring to evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal values of a place.

The application site is within Character Area 2 - Terraced streets west of Eldon Road i.e. Watlington Street, St John’s Street, St John’s Road, St John’s Hill, Prince’s Street, Eldon Place, Queen’s Road (south) where is characterised by short rows of modest two-storey terraced housing constructed of red brick. The area represents 19th century century-planned formal layout around the Oval, while the subject building is a building of townscape merit which is visible from the public realm both from St John’s Road to the front and Prince’s Street to the rear. As seen below, the application site has a unique place in between two landmarks, enhancing the continuity of terraces, next to the important green area and highly visible.



Application site (yellow circled), listed buildings (red), focal buildings (starred), buildings of townscape merit (green), views (arrows), and important trees and tree groups

The official listing of the two grade II listed buildings is read as:

Church of St John the Evangelist

"SU 7273 7/354

READING WATLINGTON STREET (east side) Church of St John the Evangelist
24.7.74.

GV II

Church of England. 1872-73 by W.A. Dixon. Large Early English style rock faced Kentish Ragstone church with red Mansfield stone and Bath stone dressings. South-west tower with angle buttresses and two light bell-stage openings. Gargoyles and machicoliation below brick spire with gables. Columned doorway at front of tower with carved lunette and applied crocketed gable over. Tripled west window, stilted arches. Half octagon turrets of different heights flank west front. Tall short nave and chancel, gabled aisle chapels. Stonework around foundation stone excavated in order to remove the foundation stone.

Listing NGR: SU7229673176"

The Oval

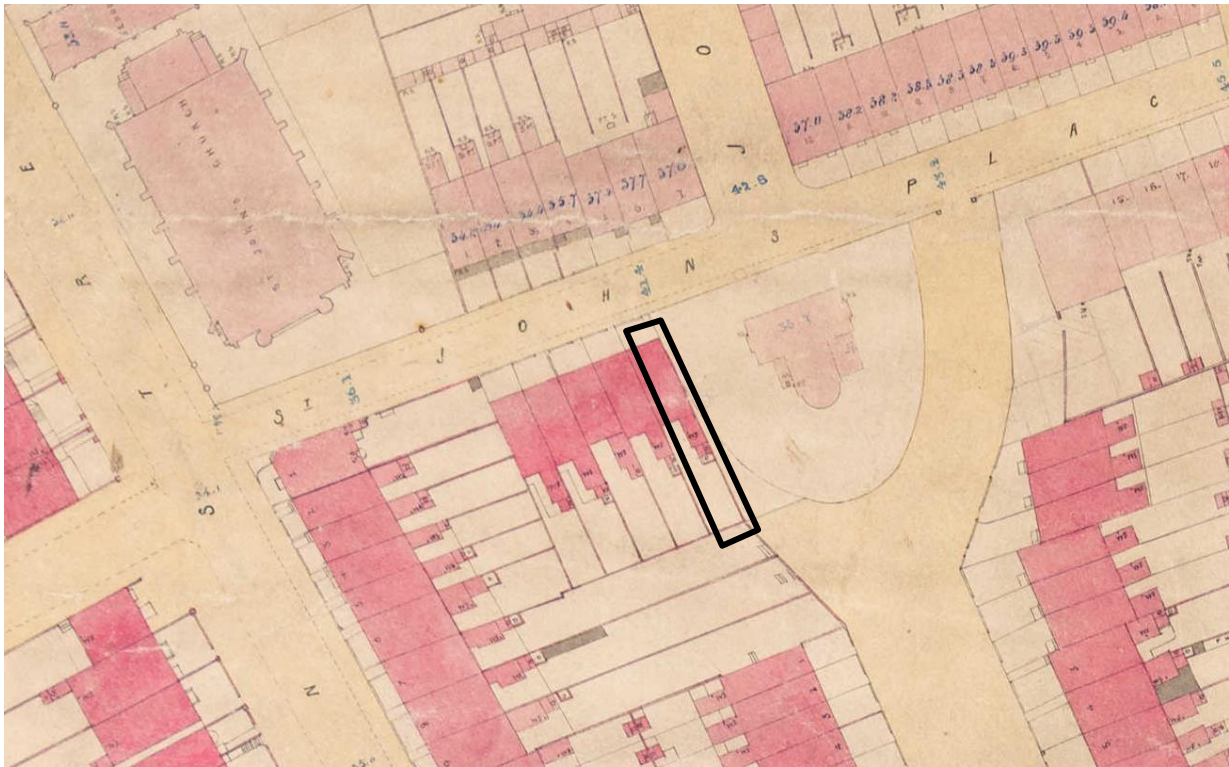
"ST JOHN'S ROAD 1. 5128 No 14 (The Oval) SU 7273 7/234 II 2. Early C19, 2 storey detached villa, a former farmhouse. Red brick with silver grey brick headers. Toothed brick cornice. Wide eaves to low pitched slate roof. A symmetrical 'T'-plan design carefully aligned so that the south end closes the vista along Princes Street from the Reading Hospital with a full height bow (1 window, French casement on ground floor). North front faces down St John's street; 3 bays, glazing bar sash windows and central 6 panel door in recessed arch with fanlight. Garden surrounded by cast iron mushroom capped rails (see George V Memorial Gardens, Eldon Square) on stone plinths; the rails are only to south.

Listing NGR: SU7234973146"

In this case, there are potential impacts on the significance of the listed buildings above, their settings and character and appearance of the Eldon Square Conservation Area.

Impact of proposal upon heritage asset(s)

The proposal is for the single-storey infill extension to the rear of the building to enlarge the existing historic extension by forming a butterfly roof and a contemporary look to the rear.



The footprint of the building in 1853 (from royalberkshirearchives.org.uk)

Whilst the proposal constitutes high-quality design elements and materials, due to the position of the property next to the landmark listed building and its rear elevation being visible from Prince's Street, it should not stand out or take attention when perceived from the rear.

The proposed single-pitched roof, which would create a butterfly roof, is considered acceptable as it would not change the roof of the historic extension and express this contemporary addition. Because its ridge level would also be lower than the historic ones, its scale would be proportioned to the existing.

However, in terms of proposed materials, proposed green brick / ceramic tiles would make the rear extension look completely new, which would result in an alien feature within the conservation area of red brick and within the setting of the Oval, whose red and grey bricks forms a crucial part of its special interest.

The conservation area appraisal states: "The Oval sits incongruously in an area of modest terraced house but looks directly down St John's Street and, similarly, to the south, it is directly aligned with Prince's Street. Trees in The Oval's rear garden soften the urban streetscene in the view northwards along Prince's Street."

The proposed PV panels would be installed on the rear slope of the roof on each side of the existing rooflight, occupying a considerable amount of space on the roof and being visible from the public realm. Due to the building's relationship with the tower of the Church of St John the Evangelist, the setting of this listed building would be negatively affected. There are not any PV panels with such a large space on a roof noted within the conservation area, and therefore, the proposal would cause substantial harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area as well.

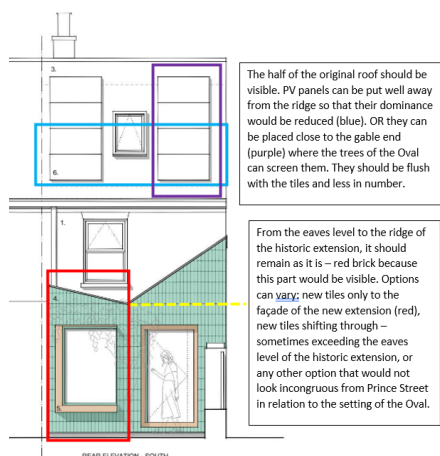


Google Streeview from Prince's Street

Overall, the proposed built form, scale and rear façade organisation would be welcomed. However, the proposed material for the wall finish, due to its covering the historic extension and being 'green', would result in harm to the setting of the listed building - the Oval. The proposed PV panels would increase the area occupied by non-traditional elements - roof light and PV panels - intrusive to the view of the church tower and would detract from the character and appearance of the conservation area.

As such, the proposal would result in less than substantial harm at the moderate level to the character and appearance of the conservation area and settings of the listed building. Given the high-quality design of the proposed development, this harm would be reduced to moderate to low levels. The proposed development would conflict with policies EN1, EN3, and EN6 of the local plan and would not meet the requirements of paragraph 208 of the NPPF as there is no defined public benefit.

I would highly recommend some revisions similar to the following:



Discussions with applicant/agent

Following the detailed response from the Conservation Officer above, the agent amended the scheme and submitted revised plans. The rear elevation has been revised so that the existing red brick is visible from the street on the existing south facing gable end, and the materials used for the rear extension have been changed to vertical timber cladding, to delineate new from existing. The amount of solar panels on the main roof have been reduced by half, however, to provide the best efficiency of the panels, the four remaining solar panels on the main roof have been positioned on the top half of the rear roof slope.

Equality Act 2010:

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7 (Design and the Public Realm)

CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity)

H9 (House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation)

H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space)

EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment)

EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas)

SPD

Design Guide to House Extensions 2021

Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal 2007

6. APPRAISAL

Character and Appearance

Policy H9 states that an extension to a house will be acceptable where it respects the character of the house in terms of scale, location, materials and design and 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. Policy CC7 also sets out relevant considerations for design.

Policy EN1 states that 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. Policy EN3 states that the special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced. Policy EN6 states new development will make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities.

The proposed extension would be of modest scale to infill the area next to the existing rear projection, and subservient to the main dwelling, and is, therefore, considered acceptable in terms of size and scale. The proposed design, although more modern in appearance, would complement the existing dwelling. The proposed materials are considered acceptable with red bricks on the existing south facing gable end which is visible from Princes Street.

With regards to the proposed solar panels, the original scheme included 8 solar panels on the rear facing main roof slope of the house. It was considered that a large amount of the roof area would be occupied by non-traditional elements (roof light and PV panels) and would detract from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The agent provided amended plans to show 4 solar panels on the rear facing main roof slope of the house, and 4 additional solar panels on the lower west facing roof slope of the rear projection. It is considered that the amended positioning of the solar panels would minimise the effect on the external appearance of the building and the surrounding area. Furthermore, the tree canopy from next door partially shields the view of the property from the Princes Street.

The proposal also includes reinstating the front boundary brick wall with colour and coursing to match the existing dwelling. A new store for bins and bikes would be located in the front garden of the property. The materials used for the store structure would be timber with a green planted roof. The store would only partially be visible from the street as it would be situated behind the front boundary wall. Furthermore, there are similar structures within the street so this would not be considered out of character.

Overall, it is not considered that the proposal would significantly harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling, the Conservation Area, or the nearby Listed Building. Therefore, the proposal is considered favourable against policies CC7, H9, EN1, EN3 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Residential Amenity

Policy H9 states that an extension will be acceptable where it does not result in an overbearing impact on neighbours. Policy H10 seeks to ensure that the amenity of gardens and other outdoor areas are not compromised. Policy CC8 states an extension to a house will be acceptable where it will not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties.

The proposed development would not have a significant detrimental impact on the amenity of the adjoining properties. The proposed extension is single storey in nature and infills an existing gap that connects the main house to its courtyard garden area. Although the rear projection may be more noticeable to the residents of the neighbouring properties due to its increase in size,

roof form, and materials, it is not considered to be harmful in respect of privacy and overlooking, overbearing effects, visual dominance or loss of sunlight and daylight.

The proposed solar panels on the roof slopes at the rear, along with the new boundary wall and bike/bin enclosure at the front, are minor in scale and therefore not considered to cause any detrimental harm to neighbouring amenity.

With regard to the garden amenity space at the host dwelling, the remaining amount of useable amenity space available to the occupants is considered acceptable. The proposal, therefore, accords with the requirements of the above identified policies.

Trees

Although there are trees within 15m of the proposed development, a tree survey or AIA is not necessary on the assumption that no ground works will be carried out in the footprint of the existing rear extension.

Ecology

The application site is an end of terrace house located in a residential area of Reading. It is considered unlikely that the building will host roosting bats.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposed development has been assessed as set out above and is considered to be acceptable on that basis, subject to the following conditions.

8. RECOMMENDATION - GRANT