

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Coley

App Ref: PL/25/0811 Listed building consent (Alt/Ext)

Address: WEST LODGE, COLEY AVENUE, READING, RG1 6LS

Proposal: Painting the exterior in a breathable mineral paint

Applicant: Mr Isaac Fennell

Received date: 03/06/2025

Target Decision date: 29/07/2025

Case Officer: Alison Amoah

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is a one and half storey detached dwelling. It is a gatehouse, along with East Lodge opposite, constructed circa 1850, part of the Coley Park estate, and a gatehouse to the Coley Manor (now an independent hospital). It is a Grade II listed building with the following listing description:

“COLEY AVENUE 1. 5128 East and West Lodges at Coley Park SU 7072 13/304 II 2. Early C19. Architect 13 A Alexander. 1½ storeys rendered. Matching lodges with hipped slate roofs. Facing fronts with plinths and string over ground floor. Projecting Doric portico (stone) and 6 panel door each. Flanking blind arched recesses. Central small arched window above with radiating glazing, gable over. Moulded wooden cornice continued up gable verges. On north front, string becomes impost mould to an arched glazing bar sash window in arched recess, cornice continued. Further set back extension. The Lodges are linked by cast-iron railings with low arrow head dog-rails. Panelled standards to gates, side gate by West Lodge.

Listing NGR: SU7052072355.”



West Lodge (Applicant's photos from submission documents)

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Listed Building Consent is sought for making good, through limited repairs, cleaning and priming of the render, and painting all external rendered surfaces (excluding the portico) in a breathable mineral paint (Keim) in a similar colour to the majority of the render.

Plans and other documents submitted received 3rd June 2025 unless otherwise stated:

- Location Plan
- West Lodge Painting Proposal
- Photographs
- Heritage Statement

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

East and West Lodges

95/00830/LBC (New ref: PL/95/0517) - To paint exterior rendered walls – Refused 27th November 1995

The refusal reason was that the proposed alteration would damage the historic integrity of the listed building. The decision included an informative “.. *preferable to carry out proper repairs to the damaged areas of render, rather than paint the building to camouflage previous poor-quality work*”

4. CONSULTATIONS

Conservation Officer – Objection.

Neighbour Consultation – A site notice was displayed, and an advert was also published in the local press.

No letters of representation were received.

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.

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

Chapter 16 - Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7: Design and the Public Realm

EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

Other

- Historic England Advice Note 2 – Making changes to Heritage Assets
- English Heritage’s “Conservation Principles”
- IHBC Toolbox Guidance Note: Guidance on Alterations to Listed Buildings, Institute of Historic Building Conservation, 2021

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.

6. APPRAISAL

Affect on a Heritage Asset

The NPPF (paras. 207, 208, 212) details 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. The more important the asset the greater the weight should be, and any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.

Paragraph 215 requires that *“where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal...”*

Policy EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment requires that all proposals 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. Proposals affecting Listed Buildings are acceptable where they do not *“Have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings.”* The policy also 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”*.

The proposed works are to paint the rendered external elevations with a breathable paint following some repairs to the render. The render, although it may have been subject to poor-quality repairs over the years with non-original materials/mix of materials, is considered to be the original elevational treatment for the application property along with the adjacent East Lodge. The listing description (it was listed 14th December 1978) specifically refers to render. Having researched and reviewed available historic photos of the application property and Coley House there is no evidence to suggest that the property was previously with a different original external wall finish of brick, as the applicant suggests in the submitted Heritage Statement.

It is considered that the external render is part of the buildings historic fabric and does contribute to its 'significance', and, therefore, notwithstanding that there may have been a number of patch repairs over the years with varying mix ratios, believed to be of non-original composition, painting over it would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset and would have an adverse impact on an element which contributes to its architectural interest. Although painting may have the effect of providing a more consistent appearance this is not considered to outweigh the harm, and its sympathetic repair with appropriate materials would be more effective in protecting and enhancing the property.

A previous application for painting over the render was refused and it is the officer's view that there is no material consideration which would lead to a different conclusion now and no public benefits which would outweigh the harm to the listed building. The advice at that time was that proper repairs to the damaged areas of render should be undertaken rather than painting over the whole building to cover up the previous poor-quality work and it is considered that this still holds true.

No detailed analysis of the render has been provided nor evidence that the original finish was not render. It is noted that within the submitted Heritage Statement the justification for the works is that painting with breathable paint would: “provide added weather protection”, “avoid trapping moisture in the wall fabric” be “necessary to preserve the appearance and performance of the rendered surface, and to prevent further deterioration from weathering.” Whilst these may be the case, good quality repairs of the render, as the original external wall material, using appropriate materials, would have the same effect.

The proposal, therefore, is not considered to accord with Policy EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) or the NPPF as it would cause harm to the significance of the listed building which would not be outweighed by public benefits.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposed development has been assessed, and the proposed works are considered to not accord with the above relevant policies and Listed Building Consent should be refused.

8. RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE LISTED BUILDING CONSENT subject to the following reason:

The proposed alteration would harm the historic integrity of the listed building due to introducing a painted non-original finish to the building, and public benefits, sufficient to outweigh this less than substantial harm, have not been demonstrated. This would be contrary to Policy EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and paragraph 215 of the NPPF 2024.

Informatives:

1. Refused Plans
2. Positive and Proactive working
3. Information regarding render repairs