

Design & Access and Heritage Statement

Address

79 Baker Street,
Reading,
RG1 7XY.



Figure 1: Photograph of the front elevation of 79 Baker Street

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Introduction

This Design, Access and Heritage Statement is submitted in support of an application for the installation of a modest rear canopy and associated solar panels at 79 Baker Street, Reading. The property forms part of a Grade II listed Georgian terrace (nos. 61–79 Baker Street, List Entry No. 1113394) and lies within the Castle Hill / Russell Street / Oxford Road Conservation Area.

The proposals have been designed with a sensitive appreciation of the heritage context. They aim to improve the enjoyment and functionality of the property as a dwelling while responding positively to contemporary sustainability objectives. The works are modest, sympathetic, and easily removable without affecting the listed building, thereby preserving its special architectural and historic interest.

Site and Surrounding Area

The property is part of a Georgian terrace (nos. 61–79 Baker Street), dating from before 1840 and listed at Grade II for its architectural and historic value. The terrace is characterised by its formal brick façades, stucco string courses beneath first-floor windows, slate hipped roofs, and brick ridge stacks. Rear gardens are enclosed with brick boundary walls, creating a consistent and enclosed character.

The wider Castle Hill / Russell Street / Oxford Road Conservation Area is noted for its surviving examples of Georgian and early Victorian domestic architecture. The area has a cohesive architectural identity with brick terraces, slate roofs and defined boundary lines, contributing significantly to Reading's historic townscape. The property therefore sits within both a highly sensitive heritage setting and a residential neighbourhood where sympathetic, subordinate alterations are carefully managed.

Heritage Statement

The principal heritage value of the property derives from its Georgian form, materials, and its role as part of a coherent listed terrace. The front façades and the consistent roofscape are especially significant in views from the public realm.

The rear of the terrace, while also listed, has historically accommodated modest, incremental changes associated with domestic use. Such rear additions, provided they are modest and sympathetic, can be acceptable where they do not undermine the architectural integrity of the terrace.

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The proposed canopy sits lightly against the rear of the house, without obscuring historic features or requiring harmful intervention into the listed structure. It is conceived as a garden structure rather than a built extension, and can be removed in the future without any effect on the building.

The introduction of solar panels has been carefully managed. On the canopy roof, they are incorporated into the new structure, with no impact on historic fabric. On the main house roof, the panels will be mounted above the existing slate, in a matt black finish that blends discreetly with the roof covering. They will not project above the ridgeline, nor create reflective glare, ensuring they do not detract from the listed roofscape or the wider conservation area.

Together, these interventions represent a proportionate and well-considered approach, balancing the duty to conserve heritage assets with the pressing need to address climate change through renewable energy generation.

Proposed Development and Assessment of Impact

The proposal comprises the construction of a timber-framed canopy at the rear of the property, together with the installation of solar panels on both the canopy roof and the main roof of the listed house. The canopy will measure 4.6 metres in width, project approximately 2.5 metres into the rear garden, and rise to an eaves height of 2.5 metres with a ridge height of 3.821 metres. It will be finished with a pitched roof clad in reclaimed natural slates to match the main house roof. The sides and rear elevation will be clad in horizontal British larch tongue-and-groove boards, chosen for their natural appearance and weathering qualities. The scale and materiality of the canopy ensure that it sits comfortably within the rear garden, reading as a lightweight and sympathetic garden structure that remains clearly subordinate to the main building.

The canopy provides a practical and sheltered external space that enhances the property's amenity, allowing the garden to be used throughout the year. It does this without compromising the architectural integrity of the listed building, since it does not obscure historic detailing or alter significant fabric. In design terms, it remains a recessive backdrop that enhances usability without competing visually with the principal historic structure.

In addition, the proposal incorporates the installation of solar panels. Four photovoltaic panels are to be installed on the canopy roof in a way that complements its slate finish and has no impact on the historic building fabric. A further four panels are proposed on the main roof of the house. These will be mounted on top of the existing roof covering and finished in matt black with slim frames, blending in with the natural slate. Their placement ensures they do not

rise above the ridge line, nor do they alter the silhouette of the building or disrupt the composition of the terrace.

The combined effect of the canopy and the solar panels is to provide a balanced enhancement. The canopy improves the liveability of the property, while the solar panels contribute to its long-term sustainability by reducing reliance on fossil fuels. The design and detailing ensure that the proposals are sympathetic, proportionate, and respectful of the building's listed status and conservation area setting. The impact on the heritage significance of the property and the wider conservation area is considered to be minimal, and the benefits in terms of functionality and sustainability are clear.

Scale

The canopy is modest in scale. At 4.6 metres wide, 2.5 metres to eaves and 3.821 metres to ridge, it is carefully proportioned so as not to dominate the rear elevation. Its single-storey form ensures it remains visually recessive and clearly secondary to the host building.

The solar panels occupy only a small proportion of the main roof slope and do not alter the overall scale or silhouette of the property. Both the canopy and the panels are therefore proportionate to the setting and preserve the primacy of the listed building.

Appearance

Materials have been carefully selected for their compatibility with the listed building. The timber frame and cladding are formed in British larch, chosen for its natural finish and long-term weathering qualities. The canopy roof is finished in reclaimed natural slate, ensuring continuity with the existing roof covering. The solar panels are black with slimline framing, which allows them to blend into the roof plane without drawing attention.

This restrained palette allows the proposals to sit sympathetically within the heritage context. The simplicity of the canopy's form ensures it is read as a contemporary but subordinate addition, consistent with Historic England guidance that new work should be "honest" yet deferential in historic settings.

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Access

The proposed works have no effect on access. All existing entry points and circulation routes remain unchanged. The canopy simply provides a sheltered space adjacent to the rear garden door, with no implications for inclusive access or emergency egress.

Impact on neighbours

The canopy is located within the private rear garden, screened by boundary walls, and is single-storey in scale. It does not overshadow neighbouring gardens, nor introduce overlooking. The solar panels are mounted on top of the roof plane and create no impact on privacy or outlook. The proposal therefore preserves neighbouring amenity in full.

Planning Policy Context

The proposals are consistent with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Reading Borough Local Plan. The NPPF requires that great weight is given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, but also acknowledges the need to support the transition to a low-carbon future. This proposal strikes that balance by safeguarding the historic character of the listed building while enabling renewable energy generation that delivers clear public benefits.

The Reading Borough Local Plan includes policies EN1 and EN3, which seek to protect and enhance listed buildings and conservation areas. The canopy and solar panels are modest, sympathetic, and preserve the character of both the building and the area. The Local Plan also includes sustainability policies CC2 and CC3, which require developments to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to climate change. By incorporating renewable energy technology in a discreet and heritage-sensitive manner, the proposal directly supports these aims.

Conclusion

The proposed canopy and solar panels at 79 Baker Street constitute a modest, sympathetic and proportionate intervention to a Grade II listed Georgian terrace within a conservation area.

The canopy, measuring 4.6 metres in width, with an eaves height of 2.5 metres and a ridge height of 3.821 metres, is carefully proportioned to remain subordinate to the host building.

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Constructed of British larch and reclaimed slate, it sits discreetly within the rear garden and provides valuable outdoor amenity. The solar panels, integrated into both the canopy and the main roof, are visually recessive and deliver renewable energy without detracting from the historic character of the building or the conservation area.

The works do not affect the historic fabric of the listed building and can be removed in the future without impact on the property. Neighbouring amenity is preserved, and the character of the conservation area is maintained.

Crucially, the scheme also contributes to Reading Borough Council's sustainability and climate change objectives, providing clear public benefits in line with the NPPF.

In summary, the proposals conserve the special interest of the listed building and the conservation area while supporting its continued viable use and sustainability. They represent a balanced and appropriate form of development, and planning permission and listed building consent are therefore respectfully sought.