

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Coley

App Ref: PL/25/0628 Full planning permission

Address: 22 BATH ROAD, READING, RG1 6NB

Proposal: Part refurbishment and part replacement of existing sash windows (amended description)

Applicant: Spire Healthcare Group c/o Stantec

Received date: 28/04/2025

Extended Target Decision date: 27/10/2025

Case Officer: Nathalie Weekes

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is located within the Downshire Square Conservation area, on the easternmost corner of Downshire Square and Bath Road. It is a three storey building of late Victorian origin with a garden. The eastern and northern boundaries of the property for the Conservation Area boundary. The Reading Spire hospital main building is adjacent to the building to the east. The site is also approximately 90m in distance from Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area.

It is not a listed building but is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset and is located within an air quality management area and located within a green link Policy EN12.

Site visit 10 June 2025



2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposal consists of the replacement and refurbishment of windows at 22 Bath Road. All of the front windows will be refurbished wood sash windows, windows as specified with architectural interest are to be refurbished and painted pure white RAL 9010. The remaining windows will be replaced with wood effect uPVC.

Case officer:

The proposal was originally for timber effect UPVC windows at the front and rear of the property, however, given the location of the property, within a Conservation Area, a part replacement and refurbishment of timber and UPVC-timber effect windows was deemed to be most appropriate, this was also backed by the RBC Conservation Officer.

Planning history

PL/07/0094 Erection of a single storey rear extension including the foundations for, and siting of, a relocatable unit and the change of use of 22 Bath Road from residential use to ancillary clinic facilities (D1 use) to Dunedin Hospital (16-20 Bath Road) - Withdrawn

PL/07/0989 Change of use from residential use to clinic facilities (D1 use). Permitted subject to a legal agreement 13/03/2008

PL/08/0275 Discharge of conditions 3,4,5,6,7,8 and 9 of planning consent 07/01284/FUL Split decision 29/01/2009

PL/09/0879 Glazed entrance door & screen with canopy over to provide disabled access. Retrospective amendment to approved application 07/01284/FUL. Permitted 21/05/2009

PL/09/1355 Minor amendment to planning consent 07/01284/FUL for new opening in garden wall and associated parking. Repositioned bin/cycle store. Canopy above side door. Permitted 19/03/2009

Plans submitted

5215 - 0100 - Location Plan

5215 - 0110 - Existing Site Plan.

5215 - 0120 - Existing Floor Plans

5215 - 0130 - Existing Floor Plans II

5215 - 0140 - Existing Elevations

SK2591 Issue A Vertical Slider Elevation and Cross Section

5215 - 0150 - Proposed Basement and Ground Floor Plans I

5215 - 0160 - Proposed First and Second Floor Plans II

33313491400 - Covering letter, Stantec 25 April 2025

11255_Spectus_Vertical Slider 6pg:Layout 1 27/01/2010 11:00 Product Specifications

Vertical slider Specifiers guide page VS.1, VS2, VS3, VS4 VS5 Spectus window systems
CIL

As received 28 April 2025

34914 Rev 1.0 Spire Dunedin Hospital Heritage Statement, Stantec, May 2025

As received 8 May 2025

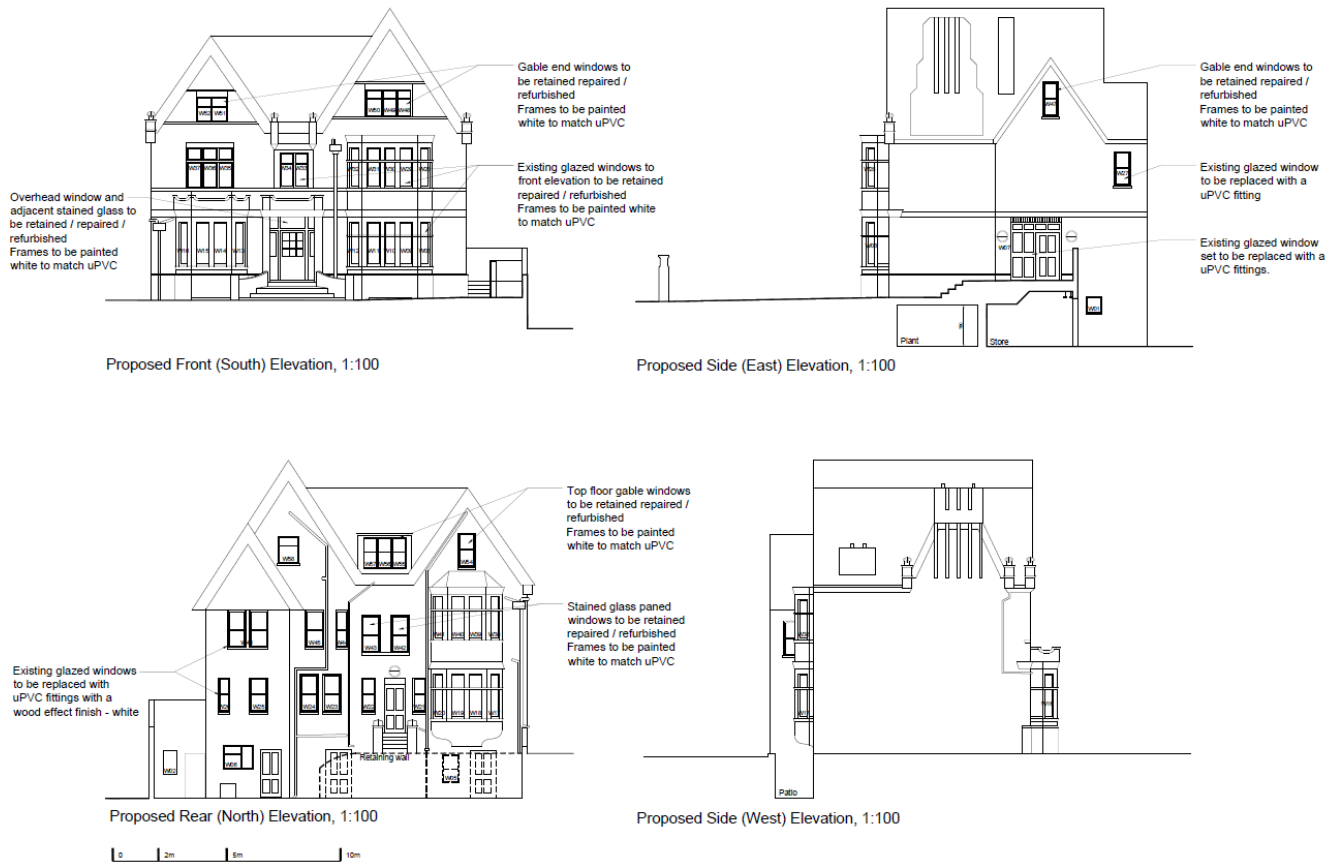
33313491400 No2 - 22 Bath Road – Heritage Technical Note - Aug 2025.d2

As received 8 August 2025

5215 - 07A-03C Proposed elevations

As received 15 October 2025

Proposed elevations 5215 - Proposed - 07A-03C



3. CONSULTATIONS

A site notice was displayed on 20 May 2025 and an advert was placed in the local newspaper.

The following were consulted:

- RBC Transport – no objections as the proposed works do not change the existing parking provision or impact the Highway, subject to a scaled down CMS to detail space on site where site operatives and visitors can park, the unloading area, site for storage of plant and materials and any required security hoarding.
- RBC Conservation Officer – The RBC Conservation Officer objected to the loss of all original timber windows into uPVC however following revisions to plans submitted to demonstrate the retention of all windows of a greater architectural significance the proposed plans to retain the front elevation, gable and stained glass windows and the reduced harm, no objections were provided subject to conditions.

Given the history, architect and the architectural features of the building, it is considered that the building meets some of the criteria for the locally listed buildings / non-designated heritage assets/building of townscape merit within the conservation area. The building was designed by a local architect, William G. A. Hambling, for Mr Edward Farrer as a residence. Known as 'Greycourt' when constructed, the building constitutes many of the characteristic features of the late Victorian Period: the roof with different patterned tiles, two-storey bay, single pane sash

windows, etc. The use of grey, buff colour and red brick, as well as stone cross windows (with vertical mullions and horizontal projecting bands/transoms), and carved stone ornamentation on its facade represents the Reading style influenced by the Domestic Revival house/villa. As such, not only the building's contribution to the significance of the conservation area but also its location, distinctive architectural features, and history should be sensitively treated in an application.

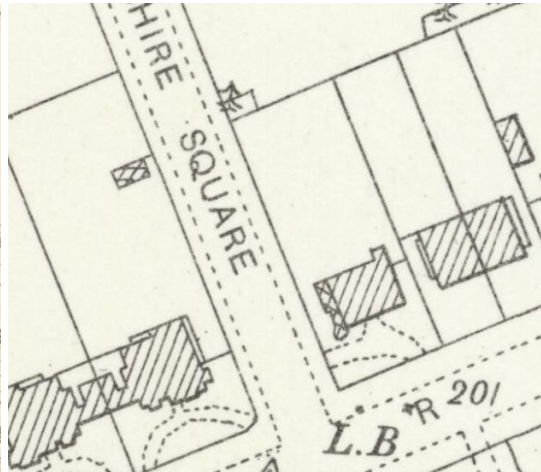
The site first appears on the historic OS Map of 1898 with a conservatory on its western elevation that was lost after the 1970s. However, when compared with the historic photograph below, the building is still intact, preserves most of its original features, and is an attractive building at the entrance of the Downshire Conservation Area.



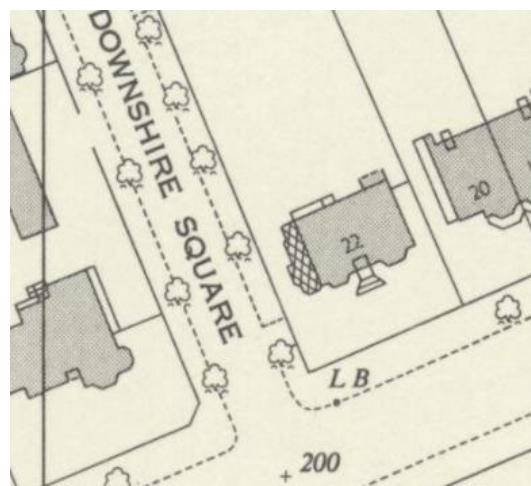
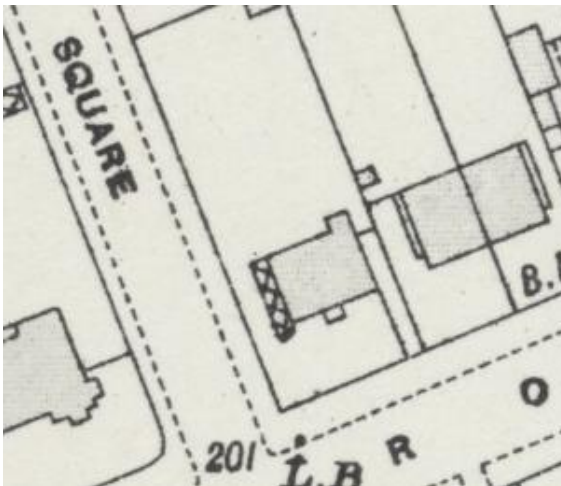
Image of the 22 Bath Road from 1899



Existing Principal Façade of the building



The OS Map of 1877 (published in 1879) (Left) and Map of 1898 (published in 1900) (Right)



The OS Map of 1931-1932 (pub. in 1934) (Left) and of 1963 to 1968 (pub. in 1971) (Right)

EPC rating or energy efficiency requirements cannot be imposed on historic buildings. The installation of plastic windows (with or without trickle vents) is not mandated under Approved Document F of the Building Regulations. On the contrary, because conservation areas have a high level of protection (under the Act), which is also recognised by the building regulations. Thick plastic windows with double glazing or vents apply only to buildings constructed with modern or new techniques; buildings with traditional construction are already designed with the principles of breathability, so they do not need additional ventilation.

The Council welcomes applications which are for the replacement of windows (beyond repair) with slim-profile, double-glazed sash windows. However, the significance of the building and its construction in the conservation area should be well described, and the proposed design should be submitted with details. For the subject historic building, it appears that the front façade is very important. The historic photograph/drawing of the façade shows that all windows are original. Because the appraisal emphasises that there are some examples of plastic windows, it does not justify the use of UPVC for all facades and for all windows. For instance, the building consists of different architectural elements in relation to its window/opening design, which are all intact: horns as in the following image:



Some windows to the rear elevation do not have horns, but the bay window has a particularly decorated window frame. Two windows on the first floor have decorative glass which forms a crucial original element for this elevation.



The building is a part of a larger building complex (hospital) in terms of its function. As such, its vacancy and poor condition of some external elements (timber frame windows with flaking paint, deterioration of stonework, etc.) should have been dealt with through regular maintenance.

There would be a minor change in the appearance of the building (BTM) due to the refurbishment of a number of windows on the side and rear elevations, with minimal harm to the visual interest of the conservation area, as the existing stone window surrounds screening the windows and the poor condition of the windows necessitate this change.

- Conservation Area Advisory Committee Consultations – no comments were received at the time of writing this report.

No letters of representation have been received.

Communications with the agent

The negative impact of replacement UPVC windows was discussed with the agent and amended plans were submitted to confirm the retention of the front elevation timber windows, windows sited within the gable and the stained glass windows at the rear of the building.

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.

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework
National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7 (Design and the Public Realm)
EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment)
EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas)

Other

Downshire Square Conservation Area Appraisal

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".

6. APPRAISAL

Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

The NPPF outlines government policy, including its policy regarding the historic environment. Chapter 16 of the NPPF (December 2024), 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment,' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development.

Paragraph 207 states, *"In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting."* Paragraph 208 says, *"Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular*

significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal."

And paragraph 210 states, *"In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:*

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness".*

Paragraph 212 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....'* Paragraph 215 states, *'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...'*

In accordance with policy EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, 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. Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance.

The windows on the front façade will be retained along with the architecturally significant stained windows on the rear elevation. On balance, in this instance the development is therefore considered in accordance with Policy EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan. Conditions have been recommended to any approval decision to ensure that the work is carried out in accordance with the approved details, to protect the character of the heritage asset.

Policy EN3 states that the special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced.

The Downshire Square Conservation Area Appraisal states 'Buildings of Townscape Merit help create a conservation area's distinctive and interesting historic townscape.' And that 22 Bath Road is recognised as being a 'corner building' with a 'more commanding presence within the Conservation Area. uPVC windows are features made from non- traditional materials identified within the area appraisal to have a 'negative impact' on the historic character and appearance of the Conservation area.

The proposed works would preserve the existing front door, front elevation windows, gable windows and windows with stained glass, which contribute highly to the significance of the Building of Townscape Merit and the conservation area.

The design of the proposed wood-effect uPVC windows must match the existing sash windows (including horns) and match the colour of the retained windows.

The RBC Conservation officer feedback that 'to find a good heritage balance, all timber windows and the front door should be repaired'. Windows to the rear and side elevations below the gable which were originally timber are to be replaced with uPVC wood effect to replicate the design, materials and detailing and are sympathetic to the character of the host building and its setting within the Downshire Square Conservation area.

The works proposed involve the removal of 'plain' sash existing windows to the rear and side elevations below the gable, which were originally timber and are currently in a state of disrepair, to be replaced with uPVC wood effect to replicate the design, materials and detailing. The proposed window replacements will be to period correct UPVC wood effect double-glazed windows to the rear and side elevations, and will retain or reinstate traditional features where appropriate, in order to preserve the architectural character of the property and its contribution to the wider conservation area. The new windows would closely replicate the proportions and traditional appearance of the historic originals, which are characteristic of the area and contribute to its historic integrity. The use of high-quality materials and a traditional finish will ensure the windows integrate harmoniously with the existing dwelling and surrounding streetscape. The Bay windows on the rear elevation also feature a timber-detailed projecting cornice to the front of the transoms which will be retained. The minor change in the appearance of the Building of Townscape Merit building with minimal harm to the visual interest of the Downshire Square conservation area, is considered acceptable in this instance. Furthermore, by reinstating or preserving traditional fenestration patterns, the proposed works will preserve the special interest of the conservation area and, in doing so, make a positive contribution to its overall character and appearance in line with policy EN3 and CC7 of the Reading Local Plan 2019, subject to the following condition:

The following condition is recommended to preserve the character of the building:

All external works of making good to the retained fabric shall match the existing adjacent work with regard to the methods used and to material, colour, texture and profile. All such works and finishes shall be maintained as such thereafter.

REASON: In order to safeguard the special interest, character and architecture of the conservation area in accordance with Policies EN1 and EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Access, Transport and Highways

The proposed works will not change the existing parking provision or impact the Highway however given the sites location on a classified Road and the lack of on street parking restrictions on Downshire Square, RBC Highways recommended a Construction Method Statement (CMS). Confirmation has been provided by the agent that all construction works including all deliveries, parking, material storage etc can be accommodated within the large rear area to the building. As such, a CMS condition is not required, however an informative has been added for the protection of the Highway.

4. CONCLUSION

The loss of timber windows in the side and rear elevation will result in a change to the building however the retention and refurbishment of the original timber windows on the front elevation and the stained glass windows will preserve and enhance the appearance of the building. The proposed materials and colours are proposed to match the existing detailing. On balance, in this instance the proposed works are considered to comply with policies CC7, EN1 and EN3. The proposed development has been assessed as set out above and is considered to be acceptable on that basis, subject to the following conditions.

5. RECOMMENDATION

Approve

Recommended Conditions:

Time limit

Plans

Materials

External works