

R A M M U R T I D E S I G N L T D

ARCHITECTURAL & PLANNING SERVICES

268 TILEHURST ROAD, READING BERKSHIRE RG30 2NE
TEL/FAX: 0118 951 0628 MOB: 0779 988 3574 EMAIL: sunil_mehan@hotmail.com

Design Planning & Heritage Statement
to accompany Planning Application submission for a property in a Conservation Area

Proposed part single and part double storey side and rear extensions

at No 53 Christchurch Road, Reading
RG2 7AT

for Mr and Mrs Sonawane

1st February 2024

Site Context and Heritage

The planning application seeks approval to provide additional accommodation at ground and first floors a part single storey to the side and a part double storey extension at the rear of the existing property.

The accommodation within the existing shell of the building is arranged in an unconventional manner where there are split levels at basement, upper-ground and then at its first floor levels.

The main entrance to the property is at its side which leads directly to the main living room.

The arrangements lead to an interesting change in heights leading from the front elevation towards the rear of the existing building.

The property is located within Reading Borough Council's 'The Mount Conservation Area', in East Reading.

The property lies approximately mid way on the northern side of Christchurch Road, opposite to the Junction with Cintra Avenue, where it faces the open green off Cintra Avenue.

The main features of the conservation area are outlined in detail from the Council's "The Mount Conservation Area Appraisal" dated April 2009 where pertinent clauses have been extracted and state that:

*The Mount actually comprises two parallel streets running south to north, linked by two shorter streets of the same name running west-east at the northern end and middle of the south-north "arms". It comprises a close knit street block of listed houses originally built for Huntley & Palmer's employees. These houses are of a particularly distinctive and unique character being constructed of gault bricks with paler brick banding and detailing, and retain much of their original character and appearance, including frontage walls and railings. **Nearby properties fronting Christchurch Road** are of a similar age, but of a different style, more typical of this area of Reading, and again retaining original walls and/or railings"*

"53, 53A. Linden Mews and 55 Christchurch Road, and 2 and 4 The Mount, all of which are shown on the 1877 map of Reading and are therefore of the same date or earlier than the main properties in The Mount. These are included in the Conservation Area for their group value and character. Number 53 is a single storey classic lodge building which adjoined the main entrance to "Sutherlands", which site was redeveloped in the 1970s as Lancaster Close (accessed from Allcroft Road). Part of the original pierced and decorative wall also remains. 53A and Linden Mews were formed from "Sutherlands" outbuildings, and although altered and extended, these retain their original spatial pattern. 55 is a prominent two storey white rendered building of classic proportions with some Georgian style windows in the main elevation"

“There is clearly therefore an architectural and historical unity to this part of Reading, not least in the use of gault and paler detailing bricks rather than the more usual “reds” that were prevalent in Reading at the time of building. This may reflect a conscious decision to differentiate between the rather grander houses built here for Huntley and Palmer’s “managers”, as opposed to those built for factory hands elsewhere. Similarly the use of grey bricks on Hillside may reflect an even grander house. The properties in The Mount also demonstrate a richness of detailing not often found in more artisan housing, for example chevron moulded 1st floor brick window arches; modillion eaves cornices; cogged capping to chimneys; bracket cills, cast iron flower guards and moulded lintels to windows; and the railings and standards at the front of the properties. “Hillside” contains even more elaborate detailing including much use of terra cotta. Whilst it is the character of the area rather than of individual buildings which should determine whether an area should be designated as a conservation area, these architectural details do form unifying features throughout this particular area”

“The area therefore possesses an architectural, historical and visual quality and coherence which makes it worthy of conservation area designation”

“properties fronting Christchurch Road are of a similar age, if different style, more typical of this area of Reading, in this case having a rendered finish”

The 2009 appraisal goes on to say that:

Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. A conservation area is defined as “an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. It is the quality and interest of an area, rather than that of individual buildings, which is the prime consideration in identifying a conservation area.

In terms of key views and vistas:

“the core buildings in The Mount and on its Christchurch Road frontage are more prominent close up than from a distance although, again, these walls and railings, and some trees on the frontage, are visible from along the length of Christchurch Road itself. The best view out of the area is along Christchurch Road to the west towards the visually prominent spire of Christchurch itself. Elsewhere “views out” from the front and rear of properties in the conservation area, where they are not protected by tree cover, are to 1930s and later dwellings outside the conservation area.”

“Some alterations and extensions to original dwellings have taken place but these generally reflect the character and appearance of the original buildings by using compatible materials and retaining important boundary wall and railing details. Certainly from the front, the properties appear little changed, but the rear elevations indicate examples of inappropriate additions, including dormers.

The properties in the conservation area have varying depths, but none have particularly large rear garden spaces”

“The Mount itself comprises a close knit street block of listed houses with local historic interest being originally built for Huntley & Palmer’s employees. These houses comprise a unique and distinctive group of buildings of both architectural and local historic value and form the core of the conservation area. They are listed Grade II. These buildings date from c.1876 and were built for Huntley and Palmer’s clerks, foremen and managers. They comprise a mix of detached, semi-detached and terraced houses with design and decorative features in common. All the properties were constructed of gault bricks with paler detailing and banding, and with slate roofs. They retain much of their original character and appearance, including frontage walls and railings”

Number 53 Christchurch is a single storey classic lodge building which adjoined the main entrance to “Sutherlands”, which site was redeveloped in the 1970s as Lancaster Close (accessed from Allcroft Road). Part of the original pierced and decorative wall also remains.

The application property is not listed, however:

Clearly, all the buildings within the Conservation area are important to its “townscape”, but the majority of them are already listed in their own right. It is therefore generally unlisted corner buildings which strictly tend to fall into this category as they have a more commanding presence (even though they may not be not visible from any great distance). The following non-listed buildings are considered to have townscape value or “buildings of townscape merit”:

- 53, 53A and 55 Christchurch Road;

The proposals relate to the extension predominantly to the rear of the building, but with some minimal addition to the western elevation to allow a more useable entrance than the one that currently exists, and therefore allowing a safer entrance and egress both to the lower floors, but more so to the upper floors in terms of safer fire protection by not having to traverse through and from “inner rooms”.

The intention is to continue the theme of rendered Quoins features through to the new additions to the building, and to continue and run through with the ornate fascias and eaves detailing form existing to new.

There is a feature entrance porch canopy with timber detail works which would be repaired and redecorated as part of the proposals.

The intention is to create modern internal living spaces with both private spaces and a combination with open plan living at ground floor.

The upper floor to have more comfortable and useable spaces, and extra sleeping accommodation for the applicant’s growing family.

The character of the external façade would be unchanged, particularly as the main extension would be hidden, or set so far from the street that it would be a negligible addition and seen as retaining the roof form when viewed from Christchurch Road. – albeit much of the rear is obscured by the existing trees that limit the view into the site from the footpath.



Heritage Status

Much of the information relating to the “The Mount Conservation Area is provided by the adjacent map that confirms the property as within the designation, and the reasons for inclusion within the Appraisal dated April 2009.

Planning History

There are no records of any planning applications that relate to 53 Christchurch Road, the application property.

No 53a has had a few additions over the years, and the latest proposal is shown on the application proposals albeit the latest scheme is unimplemented at the time of submission. This does however show that the side windows to No 53a are secondary windows or are windows to non-habitable rooms and would therefore not be impacted by the proposal submitted for approval by this application.

Pre-application advice

The proposals being submitted were presented to Reading Borough Council where detailed pre-application advice was sought under reference 231662 dated 18th December 2023, where the scheme is supported other than there was a little concern in regards the rear extension coming across towards No 53a, but as explained above the impact is minimal and we would ask if the scheme presented could be considered without change.

Trees and Arboricultural report.

An arboricultural report is presented as part of the application proposals prepared by “Trevor Heaps Arboricultural Consultancy Ltd” dated 11th January 2024

There is one fruit tree that will require removal as part of the proposals and works within the tree protection areas are minimal as already there is a masonry garden wall that lies between the trees and the new works.

The report states:

The proposals will require the removal of a low value Apple tree.

The site is already well-stocked with trees and shrubs, and so replacement planting is not justified or required. Some basic tree protection measures and working methodology (in accordance with BS 5837:2012) will ensure the retained and third-party trees are not detrimentally affected during construction.

The relationship between the proposal and trees is sustainable and will not result in any unreasonable pressure to carry out inappropriate tree works.

If the proposal is implemented in accordance with the recommendations laid out in this report, neither the trees or wider landscape will be adversely affected.

This is an arboriculturally defensible scheme and there are no (arboricultural) reasons why planning consent should not be granted.

Ecology and bats

A survey and report by “Urban Tree Experts” dated 17th January confirms that there is not the potential for roosting of bats as their executive summary states:

The buildings suitability to support roosting bats was assessed and no bats or evidence of bats were identified during the preliminary inspection, and the building has no potential roost features.

When the findings are combined the building was characterised as having a negligible potential to support roosting bats.

In line with best practice guidelines², no further survey effort is required.

Conclusion

The scheme proposals have been carefully put together to offer little or no impact to the character of the host dwelling or its place in the conservation area.

The majority of the works are to the rear of the building and would not be seen to detract from but otherwise continue the design and character features of the existing building in terms of detailing and choice of materials.

It is hoped that the application can be supported for a positive outcome by the council’s planning department.

Site photos





