Planning Statements

Design & Access Statement, Heritage Statement, and Planning Statement

Re-roofing Works at

Coop Little Pioneers Nursery and Preschool

The Hospitium, 7 Blagrave Street, Reading, RG1 1AR

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List of Submitted Documents

The application is accompanied by the following documents and drawings:

- 3426-101: Design and Access / Heritage and Planning Statement (This document)
- 3426-102: Location and Block Plans
- 3426-103: Property as Existing and Proposed
- 3426-104: Temporary Repair Works
- 3426-105: Temporary Repairs Works
- 3426-106: Schedule of Photographs (Provides visual evidence of site conditions and necessity of works):
    - Photos 01-07: General photos of the south elevation showing the flat roof is not visible due to the parapet.
    - Photos 08-09: Flat roof area over the office showing the temporary repair already undertaken.
    - Photos 10-11: Area of flat roof over the entrance lobby, confirming the presence of the failing coal tar roof.
    - Photos 12-16: Internal photos of the office showing the leak damage to the plasterboard ceiling.

1. Introduction

This application is submitted for both Listed Building Consent and Full Planning Permission, as the proposed works constitute a material alteration to the building and the property is located within a designated conservation area.

This combined Design & Access Statement, Heritage Statement, and Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a proposal to re-roof two existing roof sections at the Coop Little Pioneers Nursery and Preschool, located at The Hospitium, 7 Blagrave Street, Reading. The works consist solely of essential maintenance and replacement of the failing roof system to ensure continued safe operation of the nursery.

The site lies within a designated conservation area; thus care has been taken to ensure that the proposed works preserve the character and appearance of the surrounding historic context.

2. Site Description

The nursery currently operates as Coop Little Pioneers Nursery and Preschool and was previously known as Buffer Bear Ltd and Childcare Partners Ltd. The building functions as an established trading nursery and preschool within a historic area. The two roof sections to be re-roofed are located beneath the stone parapet wall of this listed building and lie fully within the footprint of the historic structure. Given their hidden position, the works will not alter any external appearance or affect externally visible historic fabric.

The property operates as an existing trading nursery and preschool. The building forms part of a historic area with notable architectural character. The sections of roof proposed for re-roofing are not visually prominent, being concealed behind a parapet wall and not visible from street level or the public realm.

3. Existing Roof Condition

There are two sections of flat roof requiring renewal: one located above the office area (approximately 5sq.m) and the other above the entrance lobby corridor (approximately 13.5sq.m). These specific areas are clearly referenced and identified on the submitted drawings accompanying this application. The roof above the office has already required a temporary emergency repair due to active leaks. Staff confirmed during a site visit that the active leak commenced on August 25, 2025, demonstrating the urgency and necessity of the proposed works. The internal damage to the office ceiling (see Photos 12-16) will be repaired on a like-for-like basis with matching modern materials. It is noted that the damaged plasterboard installation is a modern element and does not constitute original historic building fabric.

The existing roof consists of a coal tar system that has exceeded its serviceable life. Heritage building contractors visiting the site confirmed:

"The roof is end of life and has many fractures in the coating, this is normal for a roof this age and temp repair are not sufficient. An overlay system is required to ensure it stays watertight."

Coal tar roof systems are now recognised as problematic and potentially hazardous installations due to the issues they present, including material instability, toxicity concerns, and difficulty in achieving long-term waterproofing integrity. Evidence of deterioration, water ingress risks, and general material failure necessitate its replacement. Continued use of the building—particularly one serving children and staff—relies on ensuring the roof remains structurally sound and watertight.

4. Proposed Works

The proposal seeks to:

- Remove the existing worn coal tar roof system.
- Install a new high-performance three-layer felt roofing system to the 5sq.m office area and the 13.5sq.m lobby area.

The new system is designed for long-term durability and improved waterproofing performance. This replacement will give the building a much longer serviceable life, removing the need for constant minor repair works that cause disturbance to a Listed Building. Due to the roof's position below a parapet, the new material will not alter the external appearance of the building and will remain completely hidden from public view.

5. Design Considerations

5.1 Visual Impact (Design)

The replacement roof will not be visible externally from street level, surrounding public viewpoints, or within the conservation area. The flat roofs being renewed sit entirely below a stone parapet wall, fully concealing them from external view. As a result, the appearance of the building will remain unchanged, and the works will not affect the building's silhouette, massing, or external character.

5.2 Materials

A robust, industry-standard three-layer felt system has been selected for its performance, longevity, and compatibility with the building structure. Although the material differs from the original coal tar application, it is functionally appropriate, visually neutral, and concealed from sight.

5.3 Access

Access for construction will be via existing safe routes already used for maintenance, primarily using ladder access to the concealed roof areas. No new access points or alterations to entrances, exits, or circulation will be required. Access routes will remain the same as existing maintenance arrangements.

6. Heritage Statement

The building lies within a conservation area. As such, heritage considerations focus on ensuring that the works preserve the area's special architectural and historic interest.

Significance of the Flat Roof:
The existing flat roof is considered significant because it is part of the original fabric of the building and plays a role in the building's overall appearance. Specifically, its low profile enhances the parapet stonework to the front of the building, which is visible from the public realm. It is noted that the material comprising the roof deck/structure immediately beneath the flat roof finish remains unseen to the public.

Proposed Works Assessment:

- Do not alter the building's appearance when viewed from the public realm.
- Do not affect any historic fabric visible from the public realm.
- Are limited to essential maintenance, thereby supporting the ongoing use and preservation of the building.

The proposed re-roofing is sympathetic to the original installation, specifically not increasing any size, scale, or visible appearance of the flat roof system.

By renewing vital fabric that is failing, the works contribute positively to the conservation of the building by safeguarding it from further deterioration and preventing potential structural or water damage.

Methodology of Proposed Works:
The methodology for the proposed re-roofing is to only remove the materials of the existing flat roof that are beyond repair (i.e., the waterproofing layers and necessary associated materials).
Crucially, all the sub-structure/materials and original elements under the flat roof finish are to remain as existing. These elements form part of the main original construction of the building and will be retained.
A photographic record will be maintained throughout the works for the property file to document the condition of the existing elements, the works in progress, and the finished result.

Contingency for Unexpected Finds:
In the unlikely event that any elements of historic importance or features requiring further investigation are uncovered during the works, all work in that area will cease immediately. An immediate meeting on site will be arranged with the agent and the Conservation Officer to discuss the findings and agree on an appropriate course of action. This commitment highlights that the importance of the building's original fabric is taken seriously.

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7. Previous Applications

The following table references known previous planning and/or listed building applications submitted for The Hospitium, listed in chronological order.

Application Number	Year	Description of Proposed Works
PL/950244	1995	Full Planning Permission (FPP) for works related to the change of use to a nursery.
PL/950245	1995	Listed Building Consent (LBC) for works related to the change of use to a nursery.
PL/960034	1996	FPP for installation of external air conditioning/ventilation plant.
PL/960120	1996	LBC for minor internal alterations associated with nursery fit-out.
PL/960866	1996	FPP for additional external chiller plant/service installations.
PL/960903	1996	LBC for the installation of additional mechanical and electrical services.
PL/021460	2002	LBC for minor internal/external alterations (General Maintenance).
PL/061279	2006	LBC for replacement of existing internal and external lighting.
PL/070662	2007	LBC for minor internal/external alteration (General Maintenance).
PL/140520	2014	FPP for the installation of external service equipment (e.g., HVAC).
PL/231096	2023	FPP for non-material amendments or minor maintenance/services upgrade.

8. Planning Statement

This application seeks Listed Building Consent and Full Planning Permission due to the property's location within a conservation area and the nature of the works constituting a material alteration to the building fabric.

8.1 Policy Compliance

The proposal aligns with typical conservation area and local planning policies concerning:

- Preservation of character — as there is no visual impact on the conservation area.
- Maintenance of historic buildings — ensuring continued safe and viable use of the asset.
- Sustainable and appropriate repair — replacing materials that have failed with modern equivalents that enhance performance while remaining invisible externally.

8.2 Local Planning Policy and Legislative Compliance

The proposed works comply with the overarching aims of national and local planning policy regarding heritage assets, specifically:

Heritage Legislation & National Policy

The works are in full accordance with the duties set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The proposal seeks to preserve the building and its setting by:

- Being restricted to non-visible essential maintenance.
- Preventing further deterioration of the structure due to water ingress.
- Securing the viable, long-term use of the Listed Building.

The works are also consistent with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), particularly those concerning the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment (Chapter 16), which requires that harm to designated heritage assets be avoided. Since the works are not externally visible, they result in no harm to the significance of the Listed Building or the Conservation Area.

Local Policy Alignment

The proposal directly supports the core principles of the relevant local plan policies (e.g., typically policies relating to design, heritage, and the built environment):

- Policy on Conservation Areas: The works preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, as there is no alteration to external visibility or streetscape.
- Policy on Listed Buildings: The proposal ensures the continued maintenance and viability of the heritage asset, addressing a critical need for structural repair without impacting its special architectural or historic interest.
- Policy on Design Quality: The works adopt a practical and high-quality solution that is functionally superior to the failing original material, meeting modern building standards while being entirely recessive in design terms.

8.3 Necessity of Works

The roof replacement is essential to keep the building functional and safe for children, staff, and visitors. Failure to address the failing roof could result in further deterioration, water damage, and operational disruption. Furthermore, active leaks can create internal slip hazards, which poses a serious and unacceptable risk to the safeguarding of children and staff within the nursery environment.

8.4 Impact Assessment

There are no adverse impacts on:

- Visual amenity
- Heritage significance
- Neighbouring properties
- The public realm or conservation area setting

The works represent routine, responsible building maintenance.

9. Conclusion

The proposed re-roofing of two roof sections beneath the parapet of the listed building The Hospitium (Municipal Buildings, Abbey Ward, Reading) is a necessary maintenance activity. It is essential to keep the building watertight, prevent further deterioration of the historic fabric, and ensure the building can remain safely in continuous use as a nursery and preschool. The use of the new high-performance system ensures long-term protection for the Listed Building and minimizes future repair interventions.

The works will preserve the building's integrity, support its continued operation, and will not impact the building's external appearance, heritage significance, or the character of the conservation area. The proposals comply fully with relevant design, heritage and planning principles.

Accordingly, the works should be considered acceptable and approved.