

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Coley ward

App Ref: PL/25/1803 Full planning permission

Address: 4 PROSPECT STREET, READING

Proposal: Retrospective application for the replacement roof tiles

Applicant: Mr J Scott

Received date: 15/12/2025

Target Decision date: 09/02/2026

Case Officer: Marcelina Rejwerska

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application relates to a semi-detached two-storey (and attic) late Victorian unlisted building containing 3x flats, located within the Castle Hill/ Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area. The application site is situated to the west of Prospect Street, facing Buildings of Townscape Merit- Georgian artisan cottages at 1-9 Prospect Street- and within the wider settings of the Grade II listed terrace at 199 to 203 (odd) Oxford Road.



Figure 1 Site photo taken by case officer on 9 January 2025. No. 4 Prospect St to the right.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning permission is sought retrospectively for the replacement of roof tiles with modern materials.

2.1. Information submitted:

Design and Access Statement

Planning Application Cover Letter, dated 8 December 2025

25-041-P-002 Block Plan

25-041-P-003 Existing Elevations

25-041-P-004 Proposed Elevations

Received by the LPA on 15 December 2025

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None.

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

- RBC Conservation Officer - Objection

A site notice was displayed on site. No letters of representation were received.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

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'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Practice Guidance

Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance 2008

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

EN3: ENHANCEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS

EN6: NEW DEVELOPMENT IN A HISTORIC CONTEXT

Other documents

Castle Hill/Russell Street/ Oxford Road Conservation Area Appraisal (2020)

Local Plan Update

The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A submission draft was submitted on 9th May 2025.

Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become "out of date" when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.

Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application listed above is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in

the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the appraisal below and are not considered to be 'out of date'.

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

Policy EN3 requires that development proposals within Conservation Areas contribute positively to local character and distinctiveness. This policy states, *"Development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas."*

Policy EN6 also requires *"New development will make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development. When determining planning applications for new development, the following factors will be taken into consideration:*

- a. The positive contribution of the development to the existing historic townscape (scale, height, mass, proportion, plot size, street form, materials, significant vistas and views, and open space) ..."*

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

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...."* And paragraph 213 says, *"any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting) 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..."*

Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area, which is on Historic England's list of 'Heritage at Risk' due to the ongoing loss of character, was designated in 1972 and recently extended to include Prospect Street in 2020. About the 'Significance and Key Positive Features' of the Castle Hill/ Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area and the historic and architectural interest of 'Prospect Street' character area for an extension, the conservation area appraisal states the following:

Prospect Street contributes to the architectural interest of the Oxford Road Character Area by adding to the earlier Georgian terraces and later Victorian infill. It illustrates different architectural responses to the expansion of housing by mixing larger and smaller homes, unlike elsewhere in the Conservation Area. This mix of architectural styles creates local distinctiveness and identity, separate from but connected with Oxford Road. For example: 1- 9 Prospect Street are rare examples of Georgian artisan cottages and are of Townscape Merit; 11-23 Prospect Street are larger, Georgian terraces; and 4-26 Prospect Street are late Victorian/Edwardian properties, with distinctive architectural detailing.(...)"

The subject building is a typical late Victorian house with semi-detached composition, constructed of red and grey bricks in Reading's polychrome brickwork, under a slate roof with repeated elements of front dormer gables. In addition, decorative ridge tiles, chimney stacks, dentil eaves course just below the gutter line, as well as the recessed entrance with circular surround and common bay window, constitute the important details of the building.

Furthermore, among the negative issues and vulnerabilities of the conservation area, directly related to the proposal and the 'Heritage at Risk' reasons the following item draws attention:

"The on-going degradation of property façades with the loss of historic features and detailing such as traditional doors and windows, roofing materials, and frontage treatments. This is most noticeable along the Oxford Road, Prospect Street, Russell Street and in streets to the east with Waylen Street, Zinzan Street, Howard Street, Anstey Street, Body Road, Carey Street and Baker Street."

Not only the subject building, but also the listed buildings on Oxford Road and buildings of townscape merit have slate roof tiles, which are the dominant roofing material for the Victorian Era and the conservation area. As such, the application site and the subject building contribute to the significance of the conservation area through their retained footprint, original construction materials, brickwork, architectural detailing, and facades.

The original/pre-existing slate roof tiles were replaced with fibre-cement tiles (the Cedral/Marley 'Rivendale'), which are described as "mimicking traditional Welsh slate and, from street level, virtually indistinguishable from natural slate" in the application form.

The replacement roof material, fibre cement tiles, is an inappropriate material for the heritage context as they are not the original material used for buildings of the Victorian period and an alien artificial material in the conservation area. Therefore, this replacement threatens the heritage values of the conservation area, as outlined in the conservation area appraisal. The replacement tiles do not increase understanding of the past, nor do they reveal any particular heritage value. The only benefit could be argued to be limited to the economic one due to the building works, which do not outweigh the harm from the loss of original material.

The new work has a uniform appearance of tile execution, which lacks variation of texture, colour and finish of slate tile, as seen in the photograph below. They fail to replicate reliably, and compared with a slate, they have a short lifespan of 50-60 years, half that of natural slate, which cannot be considered a high-quality design or sustainable. There is no regard for the significance of the conservation area.

There is no clear or strong justification advising the reason not to use slate as a replacement material, other than arguably the 'indistinguishable appearance' of the fibre cement tiles. As new tiles have a materially different aesthetic, with artificial characteristics, they sit uncomfortably in the context of this Victorian property's external features with craftsmanship. As such, there is a clear harm to the significance of the conservation area, at a level less than substantial. The economic benefit from the replacement tiles would be very minimal, and there is no heritage benefit. As required by Paragraph 212 of the NPPF, 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. Therefore, the replacement tiles are not acceptable on heritage grounds.

7. CONCLUSION

The materials used in the replacement of the roof tiles are considered inappropriate and unsympathetic to the host property, resulting in harm to the character of the conservation area. It is not considered that the materials, which have been used, are particularly high quality and their use is, therefore, unjustified in heritage and design terms.

8. RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION

Due to the following reason:

1. The replacement fibre-cement roof tiles introduce an alien material to the host building and the conservation area which are harmful to the character of the conservation area in which the site is located. Due to the uniform, modern appearance of the tiles and the way that they overlap, they demonstrate an inappropriate material in the heritage context, which fails to replicate the colour, finish, and texture variations of the pre-existing slate. The new roof tiles materially harm the character and appearance of the conservation area, and there are no demonstrated public benefits to outweigh the less than substantial harm. As such, the proposal is contrary to Policies EN3 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and Paragraphs 212 and 215 of the NPPF 2024.