

Heritage Statement

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Proposed Use – Change of Use to Class C2

HERITAGE STATEMENT

7 Eastern Avenue, Reading, RG1 5RU
South Park Conservation Area

Head of Planning
Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices
Bridge Street
Reading
RG1 2LU

Date: 06 February 2025

Property: 7 Eastern Avenue, Reading, RG1 5RU



1. Introduction

This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of the proposed change of use of 7 Eastern Avenue from a dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) to a small residential children's care home (Use Class C2).

The site is located within the South Park Conservation Area.

The proposal involves no external alterations and no operational features that would alter the building's appearance.

This statement has been prepared having regard to:

- Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

2. Significance of the South Park Conservation Area

The significance of the South Park Conservation Area derives primarily from:

- Its late Victorian and early Edwardian residential character
- Consistent two-storey domestic scale
- Brick façades and traditional architectural detailing
- Regular building lines and cohesive streetscape
- Established and enduring residential use

The Conservation Area is valued for its architectural uniformity and historic domestic townscape form.

The contribution of 7 Eastern Avenue to this significance is derived from:

- Its built form and materials
- Its scale and relationship to the street
- Its continued residential function

Importantly, significance is architectural and townscape-based, not dependent upon the specific identity of individual occupants.

3. Description of the Proposal

The proposal comprises:

- Change of use from C3 to small-scale C2 residential care
- Occupation by a limited number of children with carers
- No extensions
- No alterations to external elevations
- No changes to windows, roof, materials or boundaries
- No external plant or commercial signage

The property will retain its domestic appearance and operate at a scale comparable to a family dwelling.

4. Heritage Impact Assessment

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4.1 Physical Impact

There are no physical alterations to the building or streetscape.

The proposal does not:

- Remove or alter historic fabric
- Change materials or architectural detailing
- Affect roofscape or building line
- Alter boundary treatments
- Introduce visible operational equipment

Accordingly, there is no physical harm to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

4.2 Character and Residential Function

Concerns are sometimes raised that a C2 use alters the “character” of a residential area. However:

- The building will remain in residential occupation.
- The scale of occupancy is comparable to a large family home.
- Activity levels are domestic in nature.
- There is no institutional façade or operational manifestation.

The Conservation Area’s significance is derived from architectural and townscape qualities — not the specific tenure, family structure, or care arrangements within a dwelling.

The proposal does not introduce a commercial frontage, increased built mass, or visually perceptible intensification.

In heritage terms, the street will continue to function and appear as a residential street.

4.3 Perception vs. Heritage Harm

The NPPF requires assessment of harm to the *significance* of a designated heritage asset.

Perceived social change, occupancy type, or management arrangements do not constitute heritage harm unless they result in:

- Physical alteration
- Visual change
- Loss of architectural integrity
- Erosion of townscape character

None of these arise in this case.

There is therefore no harm (less than substantial or otherwise) to the significance of the South Park Conservation Area.

6. Statutory Duty and Policy Compliance

Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to be paid to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.

As the proposal:

- Retains the building's domestic scale
- Preserves architectural detailing and materials
- Introduces no external alteration
- Maintains residential function

It clearly preserves the character and appearance of the South Park Conservation Area.

The development is fully compliant with:

- Section 72 of the 1990 Act
- Section 16 of the NPPF
- Relevant Reading Borough Local Plan heritage policies

7. Conclusion

The proposed change of use to a small residential children's care home:

- Results in no physical alteration to the heritage asset
- Maintains domestic scale and appearance
- Preserves the established residential character of Eastern Avenue
- Causes no harm to the significance of the South Park Conservation Area

The proposal therefore satisfies statutory and national heritage policy requirements and is acceptable in heritage terms