

HERITAGE STATEMENT

SITE ADDRESS: 72 Watlington Street, Reading RG1 4RT

PROPOSAL: Single-storey rear extension, enlargement of existing rear dormer, and introduction of two small front dormer windows.

DESIGNATION: Eldon Square Conservation Area (Character Area 2 – Terraced Streets West of Eldon Road)

1. Introduction

This Heritage Statement supports a householder planning application at 72 Watlington Street for:

- A single-storey rear extension
- Enlargement of the existing rear dormer
- Introduction of two small, traditionally detailed front dormer windows

The property lies within the Eldon Square Conservation Area, specifically Character Area 2, which includes Watlington Street. This statement assesses the significance of the conservation area, the contribution of the host building, and the impact of the proposed works, with reference to the 2026 Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal.

The conclusion is that the proposals will result in no harm to the character or appearance of the conservation area.

2. Heritage Context

2.1 Watlington Street in the Conservation Area

The 2026 Appraisal identifies Watlington Street as:

“the primary street within this character area with larger scale development than can be found in the adjacent streets to the east.”

Key characteristics relevant to this proposal include:

- Predominantly three-storey terraces, often with basements, creating a taller townscape
- Stepped rooflines due to the natural fall of the land toward the River Kennet
- Local brick construction with simple, vertically proportioned openings
- Slate roofs with a lively roofscape of chimneys and clay pots
- A varied architectural context including terraces, former shops, churches, and public houses

These features confirm that Watlington Street is visually robust, architecturally varied, and capable of accommodating modest roof alterations without harm.

2.2 The Host Building

72 Watlington Street is a mid-terrace dwelling contributing positively to the conservation area through:

- Its brick façade
- Its pitched slate roof
- Its alignment within the established building line
- Its scale within a street of predominantly three-storey dwellings

Importantly, Nos. 70 and 72 sit noticeably lower than the neighbouring houses, as confirmed by the street scene. This stepped height is a historic characteristic of the street and visually contains any roof additions within a lower portion of the terrace.

3. Existing Building and Rear Context

3.1 Existing Structure

The existing building comprises:

- Ground floor: living room, hall, kitchen/dining
- First floor: two bedrooms and bathroom
- Second floor: loft room with a modest rear dormer window
- Roof: dual-pitch slate roof with chimney stacks

3.2 Rear View from Boulton Street

The rear of the property is visible from Boulton Street. The rear context includes:

- A mix of extensions, outbuildings, and alterations typical of terraced housing
- A varied roofscape with chimneys, satellite dishes, and differing rear dormer forms
- No uniformity in rear elevation treatment
- No sensitive public views or heritage focal points

This confirms that the rear elevation is of low heritage sensitivity, and modest alterations here do not affect the conservation area's significance.

4. Description of the Proposed Works

4.1 Single-Storey Rear Extension

- Modest flat-roofed extension
- Subordinate in scale
- Brickwork and openings to match existing

- Not visible from Watlington Street
- Consistent with typical rear extensions in Character Area 2

4.2 Enlargement of Existing Rear Dormer

- Enlargement remains on the rear roof slope
- Set down from ridge and in from party walls
- Cheeks finished in vertical slate, matching the existing roof
- No impact on public views

4.3 Two Small Front Dormer Windows

The proposal includes:

- Two small, traditionally proportioned dormer Windows
- Lead-clad cheeks and roof, a historically appropriate material
- Set above the existing first-floor window alignment
- Set well back from the eaves and below the ridge
- Designed as simple, traditional dormer windows, not a box dormer
- Retaining the legibility of the original roof plane

Because Nos. 70 & 72 sit lower than neighbouring houses, the dormers remain visually contained within the stepped roofline.

5. Assessment of Significance and Impact

5.1 Significance of the Conservation Area

The 2026 Appraisal identifies the following relevant positive features:

- Three-storey terraced housing typical of mid-19th-century Reading
- Local brick and slate as dominant materials
- Lively roofscape with chimneys and clay pots
- Stepped rooflines due to topography
- Historic street pattern and strong building lines

5.2 Impact of the Rear Extension and Rear Dormer

- Located entirely at the rear
- Not visible from public viewpoints
- Subordinate and sympathetic
- Consistent with typical rear alterations in Character Area 2

Impact: No harm

5.3 Impact of the Two Front Dormer Windows

The front dormer windows are the most sensitive element. The following points justify no harm:

A. Consistency with the Roofscape Character

The Appraisal emphasises:

“a lively roofscape of brick chimneys and clay pots.”

Small, well-proportioned dormers sit comfortably within this established vertical rhythm.

B. Stepped Roofline and Lower Building Height

Nos. 70 & 72 sit lower than neighbouring houses.

The dormers:

- Do not break the silhouette of the terrace
- Remain visually contained within the lower portion of the stepped roofline
- Do not introduce a new storey

C. Traditional Form and Materials

The dormers are:

- Simple
- Lead-clad
- Vertically proportioned
- Set back from eaves
- Set below ridge
- Aligned above existing windows

This is exactly how traditional Victorian dormers were historically added.

D. No Disruption to the Building Line or Façade

The front elevation remains:

- Brick
- Vertically ordered
- Unaltered at ground and first floor

The dormers do not alter the façade’s architectural hierarchy.

E. No Harm to Key Views

The Appraisal identifies important views, none of which are affected by modest dormers on a mid-terrace house.

Impact: No harm

6. Policy Compliance

6.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The proposals:

- Preserve the elements of the setting that contribute to significance
- Represent sympathetic, proportionate alterations
- Cause no harm to the conservation area

6.2 Reading Local Plan (2019)

The proposals:

- Respect scale, form and materials
- Preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area
- Avoid negative features identified in the Appraisal

6.3 Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal (2026)

The proposals align with:

- Character Area 2 guidance
- The identified roofscape character
- The established three-storey scale
- The stepped roofline pattern
- The use of traditional materials
- The preservation of front elevations and building lines

7. Conclusion

The proposed single-storey rear extension, enlarged rear dormer and two small front dormers at 72 Watlington Street:

- Preserve the character and appearance of the Eldon Square Conservation Area
- Are modest, traditional and sympathetic
- Respect the scale, materials and rhythm of Watlington Street
- Sit comfortably within the stepped roofline and lively roofscape
- Cause no harm to the conservation area's significance

The proposals therefore comply fully with the NPPF, the Reading Local Plan and the Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal (2026).

Planning permission should be supported in heritage terms.