

PLANNING STATEMENT

Restoration, Adaptation and Enhancement of an Existing Ancillary Garage Building

12B Northcourt Avenue, Reading, Berkshire RG2 7HA

1. Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a Householder Planning Application for the sensitive alteration and enhancement of the existing ancillary garage building located within the curtilage of 12B Northcourt Avenue, Reading.

The proposal seeks to improve the long-term functionality, sustainability and usability of the existing building through carefully considered alterations and the creation of ancillary family accommodation within the existing established footprint.

The design has been informed by the character of the site, the architectural qualities of the principal dwelling and the wider Edwardian context of Northcourt Avenue.



The proposal has been developed with the objective of preserving the character of the property whilst enabling the building to continue meeting the needs of modern family living.

2. Site Description & surroundings

12B Northcourt Avenue comprises a detached Edwardian dwelling situated within a generous and mature residential plot.

The property forms part of a historically significant group of buildings associated with Northcourt House and retains many characteristics typical of Edwardian domestic architecture including:

- Traditional brick construction
- Steeply pitched roofs
- Chimney features
- Traditional window proportions
- Strong architectural hierarchy

Positioned within the curtilage is an existing ancillary garage building which has historically served the principal dwelling.

The garage occupies an established footprint and forms part of the historic evolution of the site.

The property is set well back from Northcourt Avenue and benefits from mature landscaping and established boundary treatments that contribute positively to its setting.



3. Existing Condition of the Garage Building

The existing detached garage building occupies an established position within the curtilage of the property and has historically served as ancillary accommodation associated with the main dwelling.

Over time, the building has experienced significant deterioration and is no longer capable of providing safe, efficient or practical accommodation in its current form. A number of structural and fabric-related issues are evident, including:

- Deterioration of the existing roof structure and roofing materials.
- Visible cracking to sections of the external masonry walls.
- Movement and outward lean to part of the side wall, indicating structural instability.
- Age-related deterioration of external building elements and weather protection.
- Poor thermal performance and limited suitability for modern family use.
- An inefficient internal layout that restricts the building's functionality.

Of particular concern is the condition of the cracked and displaced wall sections, which raise safety considerations for the occupants of the property and visitors using the surrounding garden and external areas. As a family home with a young child, the applicants are increasingly concerned about the long-term safety and condition of the structure if left unaddressed.

The building currently makes only a limited contribution to the overall functionality of the property and requires significant repair and improvement to ensure its continued safe use.

The proposed development provides an opportunity to repair, stabilise and restore the existing structure, addressing existing defects whilst improving its appearance, functionality and long-term sustainability. The works will secure the future of the building through sensitive adaptation and investment in the existing built fabric, allowing it to continue serving as ancillary accommodation associated with the principal dwelling.



(Tilted & cracked wall of garage)

4. Design Principles

The proposal has been guided by four key design principles:

Respect for Existing Character

The proposal seeks to retain and reinforce the established architectural character of the site.

The design draws upon traditional roof forms, materials and detailing that reflect the Edwardian origins of the property.

Retention of Building Hierarchy

A fundamental objective of the scheme is to ensure that the principal dwelling remains the dominant architectural element within the site.

The garage building continues to perform a clearly subordinate and ancillary role.

Sensitive Adaptation

Rather than introducing extensive new built form, the proposal focuses on the adaptation and enhancement of an existing building.

This approach allows additional accommodation to be provided whilst respecting the established form and character of the site.

Long-Term Sustainability

The proposal secures a viable and sustainable future for the existing garage building through investment, repair and enhancement.

The scheme promotes the continued use of an existing structure rather than unnecessary replacement or expansion.

5. Proposed Development

The proposal comprises:

- Alteration and enhancement of the existing ancillary garage building.
- Improvements to the existing roof structure.
- Creation of additional ancillary accommodation within the building.
- New windows and rooflights where appropriate.
- External works utilising materials that complement the host dwelling.
- Continued use of the building as ancillary accommodation associated with the principal dwelling.

The proposal does not create a separate residential unit.

The accommodation remains wholly ancillary to the principal dwelling and forms part of a single family home.



PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1:100



PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1:100



6. Character and Appearance

The proposal has been carefully designed to preserve and enhance the visual quality of the site.

Particular attention has been given to:

- Roof form and proportions.
- Architectural detailing.
- Material selection.
- Window design and placement.
- Overall relationship with the principal dwelling.

The design seeks to create a building that appears naturally integrated within the site whilst remaining clearly secondary to the principal house.

The proposal respects the architectural language of the existing property and contributes positively to the appearance of the wider area.

7. Heritage Considerations

Whilst the property is not a designated heritage asset, it possesses historic significance through its age, architectural character and historical association with Northcourt House and the wider estate.

The proposal has been developed with an understanding of these qualities.

The design preserves the historic relationship between the principal dwelling and ancillary garage building and respects the established hierarchy of structures across the site.

The proposal therefore represents a sensitive adaptation that supports the continued preservation and long-term stewardship of a historic property.

8. Residential Amenity

The proposal has been designed to ensure that neighbouring residential amenity is fully protected.

The development will not result in unacceptable impacts relating to:

- Privacy.
- Overlooking.
- Overshadowing.
- Daylight.
- Sunlight.
- General residential enjoyment.

The proposal remains appropriate within its residential setting.

9. Sustainability and Stewardship

The proposal represents a sustainable form of development through the enhancement and continued use of an existing structure.

The scheme avoids unnecessary demolition and makes efficient use of existing built fabric.

Investment in the garage building will improve its long-term condition and ensure that it continues to contribute positively to the property and its setting.

The proposal therefore supports both environmental sustainability and the long-term preservation of the site.

10. Planning Balance

The proposal delivers a number of clear benefits:

- Sensitive enhancement of an existing building.
- Improved functionality for family occupation.
- Preservation of the character of the site.

- Respect for the architectural qualities of the principal dwelling.
- Continued use and maintenance of an existing structure.
- Sustainable adaptation of existing built form.
- Protection of neighbouring residential amenity.

The proposal therefore represents an appropriate and proportionate form of development.

11. KEY CHANGES MADE FOLLOWING PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

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Summary of Design Changes Incorporated into the Revised Proposal

The current application has been substantially redesigned following pre-application discussions (Ref: PL/25/1541), conservation officer feedback and comments received in relation to the withdrawn scheme.

The revised proposal seeks to directly address the key concerns previously raised whilst preserving the character and hierarchy of the site.

Previous Officer Concern	Revised Proposal Response
Proposal resulted in cramped overdevelopment and loss of spaciousness.	The scheme has been refined to minimise visual impact, removing the rear two-storey element whilst retaining the established garage footprint and front elevation. The result is a more proportionate and sympathetic proposal.
Excessive bulk and massing above the garage.	Overall scale significantly reduced. Accommodation achieved through sensitive roof adaptation rather than a dominant two-storey extension.
Proposal would not be subordinate or subservient to the principal dwelling.	Principal dwelling remains the dominant building on the site. Garage remains visually secondary with a lower ridge and reduced prominence.
Development appeared overly dominant when viewed from Northcourt Avenue.	Previously proposed porch removed. Front elevation simplified. Visual prominence significantly reduced.
Proposal altered the relationship between the main house and the street.	Existing hierarchy between the principal dwelling and ancillary garage building retained. Main house remains the focal element within the site.

Previous Officer Concern	Revised Proposal Response
Roof design appeared cluttered, contrived and incoherent.	Simplified and unified roof design adopted. Roof form now reflects the architectural language of the host property.
Proposal appeared “stuck-on” with limited design rationale.	Revised design integrates more naturally with the existing building and reflects the character of the Edwardian dwelling.
Fenestration lacked alignment and architectural logic.	Window and rooflight arrangements reviewed and rationalised to create a more balanced and coherent elevational composition.
Concern regarding creation of a separate dwelling.	Accommodation remains ancillary to the principal dwelling. No separate residential unit proposed. No independent dwelling created.
Concerns regarding historic character and relationship between buildings.	Existing footprint retained. Design respects the historic hierarchy and relationship between the ancillary garage and principal Edwardian dwelling.
Potential increase in hardstanding and impact on landscaping.	Proposal avoids extensive new hardstanding and seeks to retain the established landscape setting of the site.
Concerns regarding the loss of a chimney.	Previous conservation advice acknowledged that the removal of one chimney could be acceptable in principle i.e "The building is well set back from the main road, mainly screened by natural elements; as such, losing one chimney could be ok.", however both the chimney have been retained

Summary

The revised proposal differs fundamentally from the earlier scheme.

Key principles underpinning the redesign are:

- ✓ Retention of the existing garage footprint.
- ✓ Reduction in overall perceived bulk and massing.
- ✓ **Removal of previously criticised frontage elements.**
- ✓ Simplification of roof form.
- ✓ **Improved architectural coherence.**
- ✓ **Retention of the visual dominance of the principal dwelling.**
- ✓ Preservation of the spacious character of the site.

✓ Continued ancillary use of the garage building.

✓ **Respect for the historic character and evolution of the property.**

The applicant respectfully considers that the revised proposal responds positively and comprehensively to the issues raised through the pre-application process and previous officer feedback and represents a balanced, sensitive and sustainable form of development.

12. Conclusion

The proposal has been carefully developed to respect the character, history and architectural quality of 12B Northcourt Avenue.

Through the sensitive enhancement of the existing ancillary garage building, the scheme provides improved family accommodation whilst preserving the established character of the site and maintaining the visual prominence of the principal dwelling.

The proposal represents a sustainable, proportionate and well-considered form of development that will secure the long-term future of an important historic property whilst meeting the practical needs of modern family life.

Planning permission is therefore respectfully requested.