



Dream Gardens Ltd

Landscape Architecture • Garden Design • Planning & Construction

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DESIGN, ACCESS & HERITAGE STATEMENT
Proposed Front Garden Landscape Improvements
7 Eastern Avenue
Reading
RG1 7RU

1. Introduction

This Design, Access and Heritage Statement has been prepared by **Dream Gardens Ltd** in support of a planning application for the proposed redevelopment of the front garden at **7 Eastern Avenue, Reading RG1 7RU**, situated within the **South Park Conservation Area**.

The proposal seeks to transform the existing frontage into a carefully designed landscape that accommodates modern residential requirements while preserving and enhancing the architectural and historic character of the surrounding streetscape. The scheme introduces high-quality hard and soft landscaping, sympathetic boundary treatments, ornamental planting and sustainable drainage measures to create an attractive and functional front garden that respects the significance of the Conservation Area.

Dream Gardens Ltd is a Berkshire-based landscape design and construction company specialising in residential landscape architecture, heritage-sensitive garden design and planning-led landscape development. Our work combines traditional design principles with modern construction techniques, ensuring that every project enhances both the property and its wider setting. We work closely with homeowners, architects and planning authorities to develop landscape proposals that are aesthetically pleasing, environmentally responsible and fully integrated with their surroundings.

The objective of this proposal is not simply to provide off-street parking, but to create a landscape-led frontage where planting, traditional materials and carefully considered design remain the dominant visual elements. Parking has therefore been integrated into the overall composition rather than becoming its principal feature.

2. Site Description

The application site comprises a detached Victorian dwelling located on the northern side of Eastern Avenue within Reading's South Park Conservation Area. The

property is set back from the highway behind a generous front garden which forms an important part of the character of the street.

Eastern Avenue is characterised by substantial late Victorian and Edwardian houses set within spacious plots, mature planting, clipped hedges and traditional brick boundary walls. These features create an attractive suburban streetscape with a strong sense of openness and greenery.

The existing front garden currently provides limited visual cohesion and does not make the most effective use of the available space. While the property requires practical off-street parking to meet contemporary residential needs, it is recognised that the introduction of hardstanding within a Conservation Area must be carefully balanced against the need to preserve its historic character.

The proposal therefore retains significant areas of planting while introducing a more coherent landscape structure that complements both the architecture of the dwelling and the wider streetscape.

3. The South Park Conservation Area

The property lies within the South Park Conservation Area, one of Reading's most distinctive residential neighbourhoods. The Conservation Area was designated because of its special architectural and historic interest, characterised by substantial Victorian and Edwardian houses, mature tree-lined streets and well-defined front gardens enclosed by traditional boundary walls and hedging.

Unlike many modern residential developments, the front gardens within the Conservation Area are not simply incidental open spaces but form an integral component of the historic townscape. Their generous proportions, mature vegetation and carefully detailed boundary treatments contribute significantly to the area's distinctive identity.

Traditional materials such as red multi-stock brick, natural stone detailing, clay roof tiles, painted timber joinery and ornamental planting establish a consistent

architectural language throughout Eastern Avenue. Mature trees and landscaped frontages soften the built form and provide seasonal variation, biodiversity and an attractive setting for the historic buildings.

Planning policy seeks to ensure that any alterations within the Conservation Area preserve or enhance these characteristics. Consequently, proposals that result in excessive hardstanding, removal of planting or the loss of traditional boundary treatments are generally discouraged. Conversely, schemes that retain generous planting, use appropriate materials and reinforce the historic character of the streetscape are positively encouraged.

The proposed landscape design has therefore been developed specifically to respond to these conservation objectives.

4. Design Philosophy

The overarching design philosophy is founded upon four key principles:

Respect for Heritage

The design reinforces the Victorian character of the property through the use of traditional materials, sympathetic detailing and planting appropriate to the period setting.

Landscape First

Although off-street parking is required, the proposal has been designed so that landscaping rather than parked vehicles remains the dominant visual feature when viewed from the public highway.

Environmental Sustainability

Permeable surfaces, generous planting areas and sustainable drainage principles have been incorporated to reduce surface water runoff, improve biodiversity and contribute positively to the local environment.

High Quality Design

Every element of the proposal—from the brick boundary walls to the planting palette—has been selected to create a cohesive and enduring landscape that will mature gracefully over time.

5. Proposed Landscape Design

The proposed layout has been carefully organised to balance functionality with visual quality.

Three off-street parking spaces are provided in a logical arrangement that allows safe vehicle manoeuvring whilst minimising the visual dominance of hardstanding. Rather than occupying the entire frontage, the parking area is framed by generous planting beds, clipped hedging and a traditional boundary wall, ensuring that the appearance remains predominantly green.

A clearly defined pedestrian route connects the public pavement to the principal entrance using stepping stones and traditional paving materials, reinforcing the hierarchy between pedestrian and vehicular movement.

The entrance sequence has been designed to provide an attractive arrival experience through the use of ornamental planting, seasonal colour and carefully positioned feature trees.

The proposed side boundary fencing has been recessed behind the principal frontage to reduce its visual prominence from the street.

6. Boundary Treatment and Materials

The proposed boundary wall has been designed as a contemporary interpretation of traditional Victorian frontage walls found throughout Eastern Avenue.

The wall will be constructed using high-quality Victorian red multi-stock facing bricks selected to complement the existing dwelling. Mortar joints will be finished in a light buff lime-based mortar to reflect traditional construction methods.

Blue engineering brick coping has been proposed to provide durability while maintaining a traditional appearance.

Low brick piers articulate the boundary wall at regular intervals, reflecting the rhythm commonly found along neighbouring frontages.

Behind the wall, clipped evergreen hedging provides additional screening, softens the appearance of the masonry and contributes to the verdant character of the street.

Together these elements create a boundary treatment that is both functional and sympathetic to the Conservation Area.

7. Reinforced Grass Driveway (Permeable System)

The main driveway area will be constructed using a reinforced grass paving system (also known as a Grass Reinforcement System or Cellular Grass Grid). This permeable solution provides stable vehicular access and parking while maintaining a soft landscaped appearance in keeping with the character of the South Park Conservation Area.

The reinforced grass system allows grass to grow through a honeycomb grid structure, supporting vehicle loads while significantly reducing surface water runoff. This approach preserves the green character of the frontage, softens the visual impact of the parking area and contributes to the site's Sustainable Drainage strategy.

Key benefits:

- Permeable surface that significantly reduces surface water runoff and supports groundwater recharge.
- Maintains a natural green appearance in keeping with the landscaped setting of Eastern Avenue.

- Suitable for cars, SUVs and light vans.
- Environmentally responsible and SuDS compliant.
- Lower visual impact than impermeable surfaces such as block paving or asphalt.
- Supports biodiversity and reduces the urban heat island effect.
- Appropriate for use within Conservation Areas.

Typical construction build-up:

1. Grass grid system – 40–50 mm deep HDPE cellular grid.
2. Bedding layer – 30–40 mm of 2–6 mm angular grit.
3. Sub-base – 180–200 mm of Type 3 open-graded aggregate.
4. Geotextile membrane – Non-woven permeable separator.
5. Subgrade – Compacted existing ground.
6. Rootzone – 40–50 mm free-draining sand/topsoil mix.
7. Grass seed – Perennial ryegrass, strong creeping red fescue and chewings fescue mix.

The use of a reinforced grass driveway is consistent with the Conservation Area's emphasis on preserving green frontages, minimising hardstanding and maintaining the landscaped character of the street. This approach provides the required parking while ensuring that the forecourt continues to appear as a planted garden space.

4.0 PROPOSED LANDSCAPE AND DRIVEWAY DESIGN

4.6 Reinforced Grass Driveway (Permeable System)

The main driveway area will be constructed using a reinforced grass paving system (also known as a Grass Reinforcement System or Cellular Grass Grid). This permeable solution provides stable vehicular access and parking while maintaining a soft landscaped appearance in keeping with the character of the South Park Conservation Area.

The reinforced grass system allows grass to grow through a honeycomb grid structure, supporting vehicle loads while significantly reducing surface water runoff. This approach preserves the green character of the frontage, softens the visual impact of the parking area and contributes to the site's Sustainable Drainage strategy.

This system offers the following key benefits:

- Permeable surface that significantly reduces surface water runoff and supports groundwater recharge.
- Maintains a natural green appearance in keeping with the landscaped setting of Eastern Avenue.
- Suitable for cars, SUVs and light vans with appropriate sub-base construction.
- Environmentally responsible and SuDS compliant.
- Lower visual impact than impermeable hard surfaces such as block paving or asphalt.
- Supports biodiversity and reduces urban heat island effect.
- Appropriate for use within Conservation Areas where preservation and enhancement of landscape character is a priority.

4.6.1 System Description

The reinforced grass driveway will be constructed using a high-strength HDPE cellular grass grid system, filled with a free-draining rootzone and seeded with a hard-wearing turf mix. A typical build-up for a domestic driveway is as follows:

1. **Grass grid system** – 40–50 mm deep HDPE cellular grid.
2. **Bedding layer** – 30–40 mm of 2–6 mm angular grit.
3. **Sub-base** – 180–200 mm of Type 3 open-graded aggregate.
4. **Geotextile membrane** – Non-woven permeable separator.
5. **Subgrade** – Compacted existing ground.
6. **Rootzone** – 40–50 mm free-draining sand/topsoil mix.
7. **Grass seed** – Perennial ryegrass, strong creeping red fescue and chewings fescue mix.

This construction provides excellent load-bearing capacity for cars and light vehicles while allowing water to infiltrate naturally through the surface into the sub-base. The system is robust, long-lasting and easy to maintain with regular mowing.



Figure 3: Example of Reinforced Grass Driveway in Use



Figure 4: Close-up of Grass Grid System with Grass Growth

4.6.2 Relevance to the Conservation Area

The use of a reinforced grass driveway is consistent with the Conservation Area's emphasis on preserving green frontages, minimising hardstanding and maintaining the landscaped character of the street. This approach provides necessary parking while ensuring that the forecourt continues to appear as a soft, planted garden space, thus preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the South Park Conservation Area in accordance with national and local planning policy.

Figure: Reinforced grass driveway system and technical specification.

8. Planting Strategy

Planting forms the defining feature of the proposed landscape.

The design introduces a carefully considered planting palette that provides year-round interest while supporting biodiversity and strengthening the green character of the Conservation Area.

A specimen **Magnolia stellata** is proposed as the principal ornamental tree, providing early spring blossom and architectural form. Subject to available soil volume, a second ornamental tree such as **Amelanchier lamarckii** may be incorporated to provide autumn colour, seasonal variation and additional wildlife value.

Shrub planting includes Hydrangea, Skimmia japonica, Choisya ternata and Viburnum tinus to create layered structure throughout the year.

Lower planting incorporates Lavender, Nepeta, Geranium 'Rozanne', Heuchera and Salvia to provide extended flowering periods and valuable nectar sources for bees and butterflies.

Groundcover species such as Pachysandra terminalis and Vinca minor will suppress weeds, reduce maintenance requirements and improve soil health.

Spring bulbs including Allium, Narcissus and Crocus will introduce seasonal colour while supporting early pollinating insects.

The proposed hedge is intended to remain clipped but with gently rounded profiles that reflect mature traditional hedging rather than formal geometric forms.

9. Sustainability and Biodiversity

The proposal seeks to improve the environmental performance of the site through the integration of sustainable landscape design principles.

Hard surfaces will be formed using permeable construction wherever practicable, allowing rainfall to infiltrate naturally into the ground and reducing pressure on the public drainage network.

Surface water will be directed towards planting areas and permeable sub-base construction in accordance with Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) principles.

The increased planting significantly enhances biodiversity through the introduction of flowering shrubs, ornamental trees and pollinator-friendly perennial planting. These measures provide habitat, seasonal food sources and ecological connectivity within the urban environment.

The proposal therefore delivers environmental improvements that extend beyond the boundaries of the site.

10. Heritage Impact Assessment

The proposed development has been designed to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the South Park Conservation Area.

The traditional brick boundary wall reflects the established pattern of enclosure found throughout Eastern Avenue, while clipped hedging and generous planting reinforce the verdant character of the streetscape.

The proposal avoids the creation of an extensive open parking court by ensuring that hardstanding is visually softened through landscape design. Planting beds remain a significant component of the frontage, and ornamental trees contribute vertical structure consistent with neighbouring properties.

The materials palette has been selected to complement the existing Victorian dwelling, ensuring that the new landscape appears as a natural extension of the property's historic architecture.

Overall, the proposal represents a sensitive enhancement that reinforces rather than diminishes the special qualities of the Conservation Area.

11. Planning Policy Compliance

The proposed development has been prepared having regard to the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework, the Reading Borough Local Plan, the South Park Conservation Area Appraisal and relevant design guidance.

The scheme:

- preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the Conservation Area;
- employs traditional materials that complement the existing architecture;
- retains substantial soft landscaping and mature planting character;
- incorporates sustainable drainage measures;
- improves biodiversity through new planting;
- provides practical residential parking without allowing vehicles to dominate the streetscape; and
- contributes positively to the quality of the public realm.

12. Conclusion

The proposed landscape improvements at **7 Eastern Avenue** have been developed with a clear understanding of the architectural significance of the South Park Conservation Area and the planning policies that seek to preserve its special character.

Rather than introducing a conventional parking court, the proposal creates a high-quality landscaped frontage in which planting, traditional boundary treatments and carefully selected materials remain the defining features of the design. The introduction of ornamental trees, mixed shrub planting, clipped hedging and permeable surfaces enhances biodiversity, supports sustainable drainage and reinforces the verdant character that distinguishes Eastern Avenue.

The proposed brick walls, constructed in materials selected to complement the existing Victorian dwelling, together with traditional paving and sensitive landscape detailing, ensure that the development sits comfortably within its historic context. By balancing modern functional requirements with a strong commitment to heritage, environmental sustainability and design quality, the scheme represents an enhancement to both the property and the wider Conservation Area.

For these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that the proposal preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the South Park Conservation Area and accords with national and local planning policy. Approval of the application is therefore respectfully requested.