

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Caversham Heights Ward

App Ref: PL/26/0827 Listed building consent (Alt/Ext)

Address: HIGHDOWN SCHOOL, SURLEY ROW, EMMER GREEN, READING, RG4 8LR

Proposal: To apply anti slip coating to the Main Stone staircase in the Manor House to prevent slip risk.

Applicant: Mr Michael Jones

Received date: 23/06/2026

Target Decision date: 18/08/2026

Case Officer: Gary Miles

Site Description

The application site part of Highdown School, a Secondary school and sixth form located in Emmer Green, Reading. The site comprises a mix of historic Listed Buildings and later educational buildings and structures all set within landscaped grounds.

The Manor House formerly Caversham Grove forms the main building (application site) a well-preserved Grade II Listed example of late Victorian educational architecture.

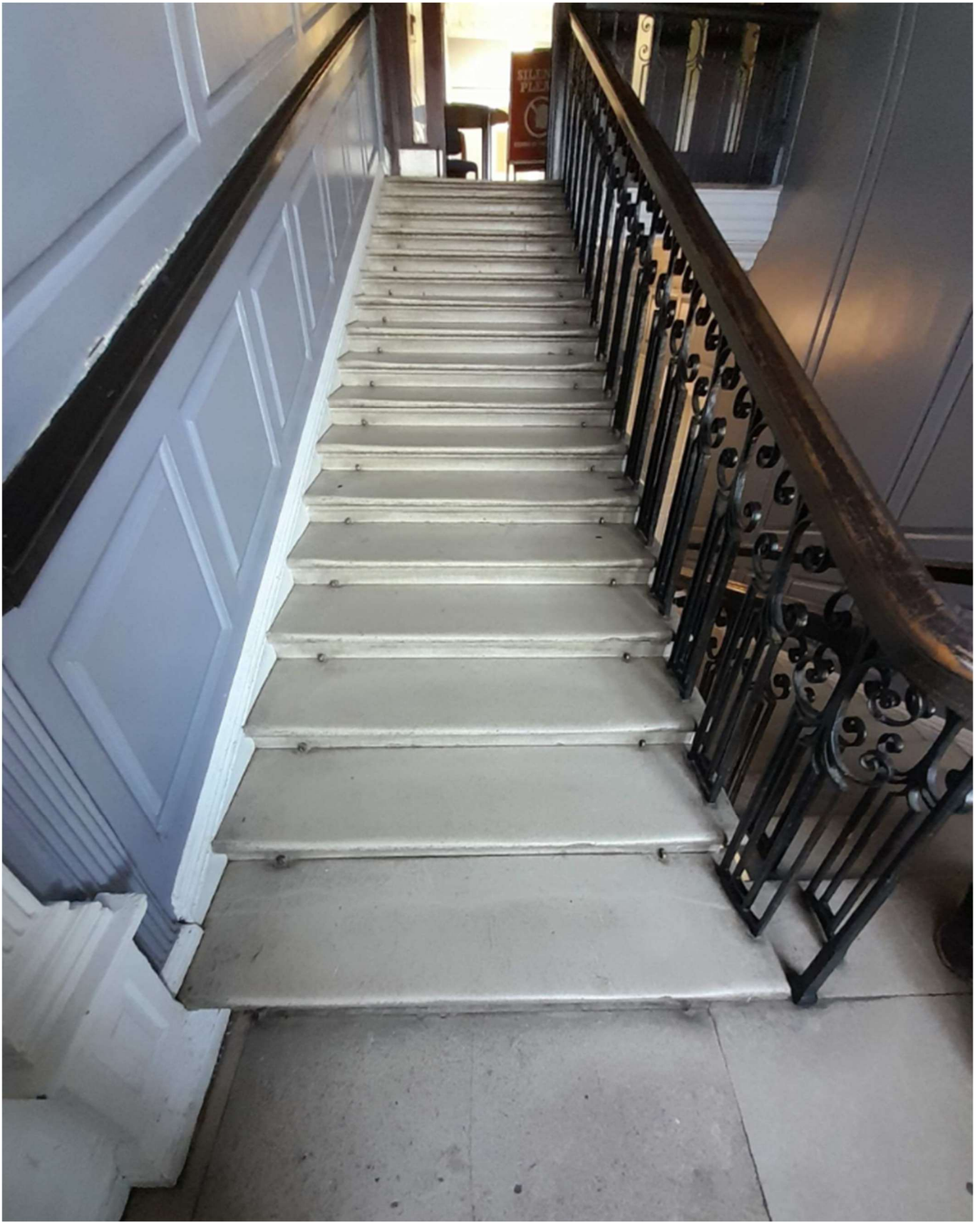
Site visit date: 30th April 2026 for an earlier application later withdrawn.

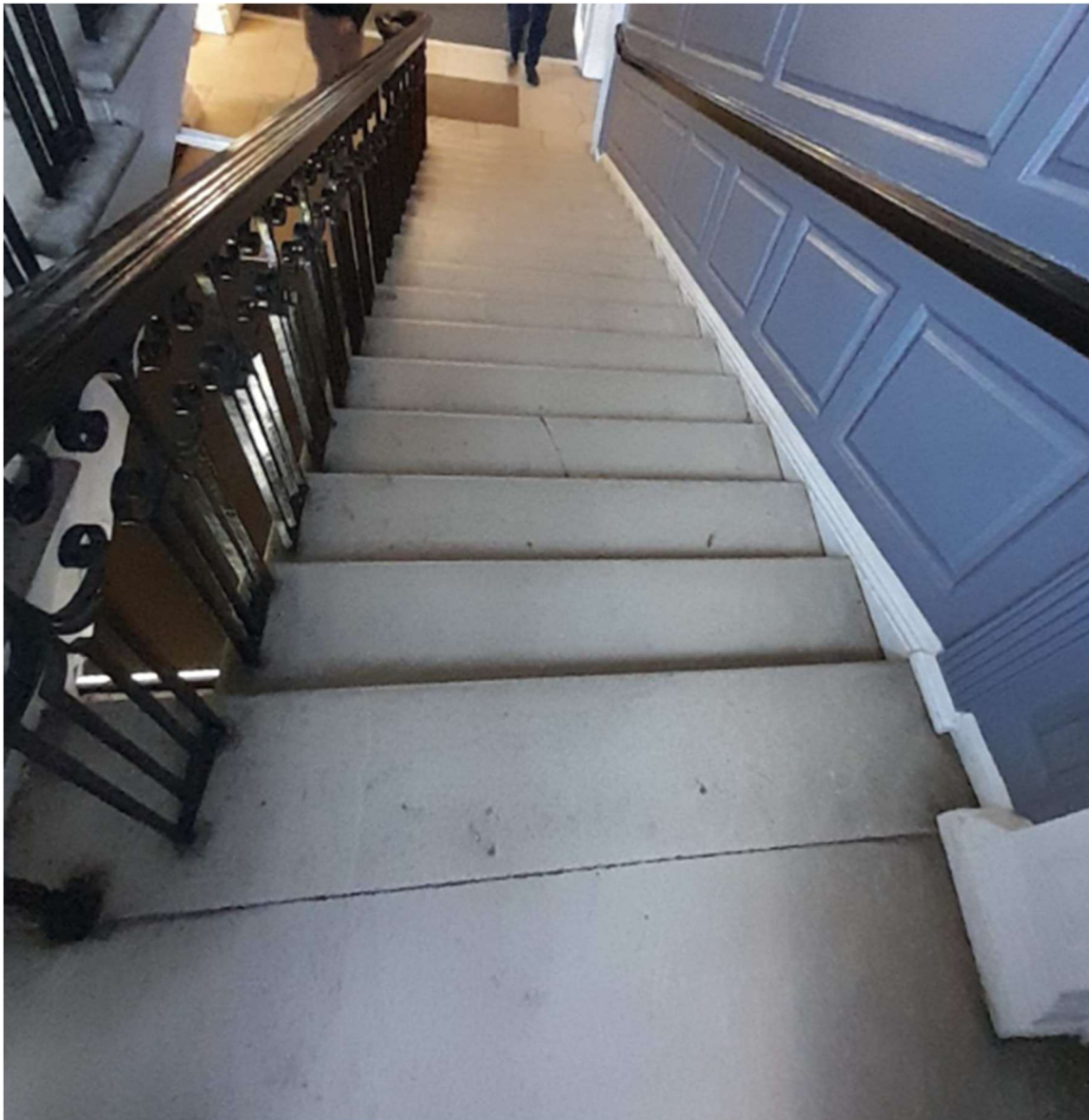


Front elevation of the Grade II Manor House (Highdown School)



Rear elevation of the Grade II Manor House (Highdown School)







Stone staircase in Manor House

Proposal

To apply anti slip coating to the main stone staircase in the Manor House to prevent slip risk. The main staircase in the manor house is stone with very shallow treads which over the years have become extremely worn away. In the wetter months the steps become slippery. The staircase in the main staircase for accessing classrooms in the manor house, because of the associated hazard of slips/trips and falls identified as a result of the wet stone staircase.

The school have considered carpeting the treads, but this will be costly and become easily dirty, anti-slip sticky tape has been considered, but this in itself could cause a trip hazard. The proposal consists of applying a clear anti-slip coating to the treads of the main stone staircase using a dedicated product.

The anti-slip product consists of a high performance, water based acrylic textured coating. Its unique properties offer a durable finish that is UV and chemical resistant with effective anti-slip protection. The product is apparently non-toxic, single component coating and has low odour and is easy to apply. Tuff Grip Clear states it offers the perfect solution for coating wood, concrete, decks, walkways and other surfaces where a clear, high-traction surface is desired.

Documents Submitted

The applicant supplied the following:

Tuff Grip Clear Technical Data Sheet

Tuff Grip Clear supporting safety data sheet

Design & Access Statement

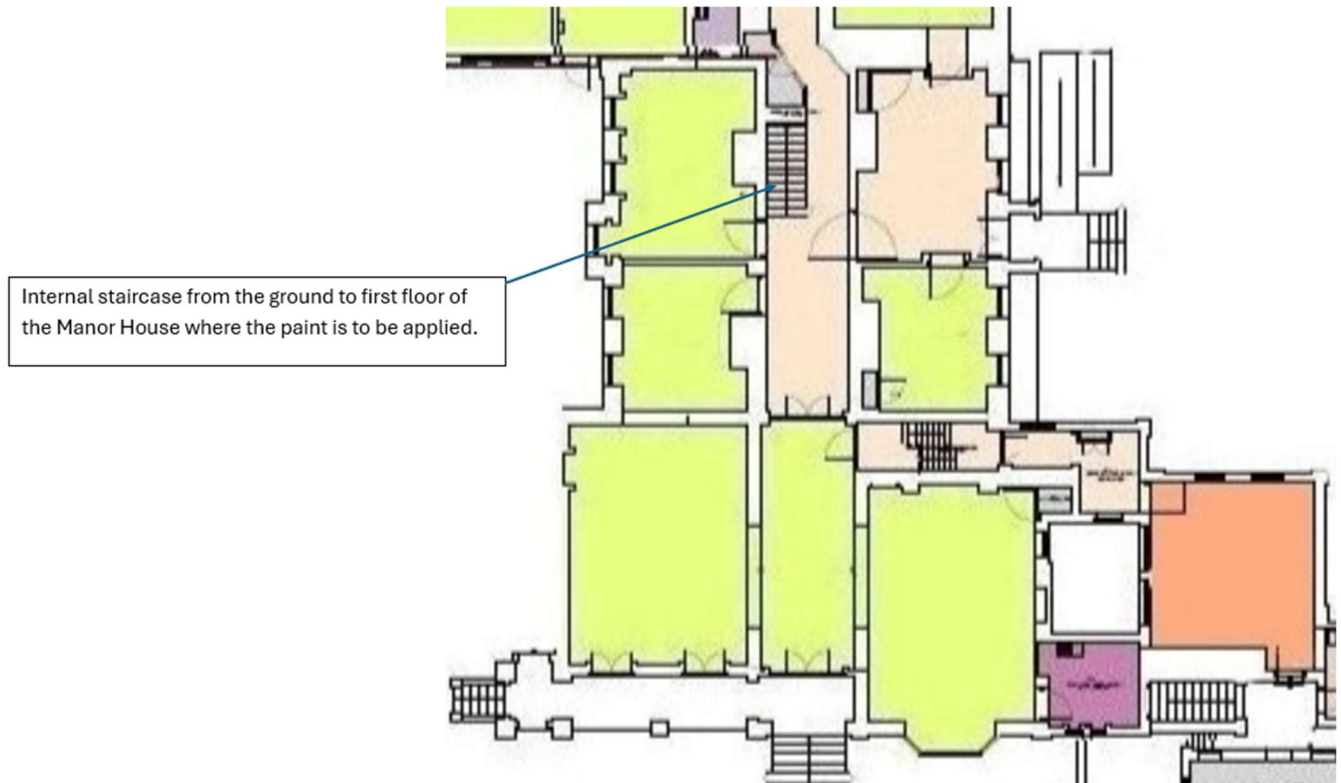
Drawing no: TQRQM26106120252321 Location Plan, dated 16 April 26

Block Plan showing internal staircase location.

Received by the LPA on 23 June 2026

Further supporting information (link to the product online) submitted by applicant.

Received by the LPA on 6 July 2026



Relevant Planning History

PL/26/0510 – Paint staircase nosing with anti-slip paint in the main Manor House – Withdrawn as the proposed anti-slip product was deemed unsuitable by the Conservation officer.

Consultation

Internal

- **Conservation Officer memo received 01/07/2026 and 16/07/2026**

I have reviewed the submitted information for the application above.

As I recall from the withdrawn application, there were two concerns about the proposed anti-slip paint – the impact on the appearance of the staircase and the possible impact on the substrate/original stone of the staircase.

I happily noted that the proposed paint is clear that its visual impact would be minimal.

However, the data sheets provided as the details of the proposed paint do not state it is suitable for stone, and the manufacturer says its removal is through paint stripper or acetone, which raises concern that this method can harm the historic material. Therefore, can the applicant provide further information on the compatibility and reversibility of the proposed material?

We also need the details of

- Existing substrate and finish of the stair
- No sanding or abrasive preparation of the historic fabric

- A maintenance and reapplication strategy
- Exact location of the paint

We should also add a pre-commencement condition: sample testing to confirm if this product is suitable for stone and for use.

I am happy with the proposed material as it appears more compatible with the historic stone. I suggest the following conditions.

Prior to application of the anti-slip treatment to the staircase, a sample area of approximately 1m2 shall be applied to an inconspicuous section for the inspection and written approval of the Local Planning Authority. The approved treatment shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved sample.

REASON: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and in accordance with the Policy EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

The anti-slip treatment shall be carried out only in accordance with the manufacturer's specification and shall not include any abrasive preparation, grinding, sanding, acid etching or other alteration of historic stonework unless otherwise first agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In order to safeguard the special architectural or historic interest of the heritage asset in accordance with Policy EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

External

- One planning notice was attached to the streetlamp column outside the main school entrance off Surley Row on 21st July 2026 and left place for the statutory 21-day public consultation period.

No letters of representation have been received.

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.

Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance and Legal Context

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. The Development Plan for Reading relevant to the application site comprises the *Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)*.

Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

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.

The '*National Planning Policy framework*' ("NPPF") 2018 states clearly that its content is to be a material consideration in the determination of applications. The 'NPPF' states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Development Framework (LDF) (Core Strategy and Sites and Detailed Policies Document) according to their degree of consistency with the '*NPPF*' (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the '*NPPF*', the greater the weight that may be given). Accordingly, the '*NPPF*' and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant

Relevant Policies

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2026

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7 Design and the Public Realm

EN1 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

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. The submission version of the Local Plan 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 is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remain very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the determination of this planning application and are not considered to be 'out of date'.

Appraisal

The NPPF details 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. The more important the asset the greater the weight should be, and any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.

Policy EN1 states that the character and integrity of listed buildings will be preserved, and the Council will seek to enhance the settings of listed buildings wherever appropriate, by ensuring that new development in their vicinity is sympathetic.

Reading Borough Council's Conservation Officer was consulted as the building is Grade II Listed. Additional details were requested from the applicant to help the Conservation Officer understand the proposed works. The applicant submitted additional documents which confirmed the proposed anti-slip coating is suitable for stone of this type. The Conservation Officer reviewed the documents and concluded in a memo dated 16th July that there are no objections to the proposed works.

Overall, by virtue of the proposed works being internal and temporary in terms of a product which can be easily removed, the proposal to paint the treads of the stone staircase in the manor house at Highdown School is not considered to adversely impact the fabric or the heritage asset of the historic building. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with Policies EN1 and CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Conclusion

The proposed development has been assessed as set out above and is considered to be acceptable on that basis, subject to the following conditions.

Recommendation

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Plus, the following tailored condition:

The anti-slip treatment shall be carried out only in accordance with the manufacturer's specification and shall not include any abrasive preparation, grinding, sanding, acid etching or other alteration of historic stonework unless otherwise first agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In order to safeguard the special architectural or historic interest of the heritage asset in accordance with Policy EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

And the following pre commencement condition:

Prior to application of the anti-slip treatment to the staircase, a sample area of approximately 1m² shall be applied to an inconspicuous section for the inspection and written approval of the Local Planning Authority. The approved treatment shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved sample.

REASON: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and in accordance with the Policy EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.