

HERITAGE STATEMENT

17 Coley Avenue, Reading, RG1 6LJ

Proposed Single-Storey Rear Extension, Two-Storey Side Extension, Porch Alteration and Formation of Dropped Kerb

1. Introduction



This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for alterations and extensions to **17 Coley Avenue, Reading, RG1 6LJ**, located within the designated Conservation Area.

The proposal comprises:

- a two-storey extension to the side of the existing dwelling;
- a single-storey extension to the rear;
- alterations/conversion to the existing front porch/entrance;

- formation of a dropped kerb to provide vehicular access to the existing front driveway; and
- associated alterations to doors, windows and external finishes.

The property is an established mid-20th-century residential dwelling, understood to date from approximately the 1950s. It is not considered to be of individual listed-building significance. Its heritage interest derives principally from its contribution to the wider residential townscape and landscaped character of Coley Avenue.

Particular consideration has therefore been given to the relationship between the existing dwelling, the street scene, mature trees and vegetation, front boundary, neighbouring properties and the wider character of the Conservation Area.

2. Existing Property and Architectural Character

No. 17 is a traditional brick-built two-storey dwelling with a pitched, tiled roof and relatively simple domestic architectural detailing.

The principal elevation facing Coley Avenue is characterised by:

- red/brown brickwork;
- a simple pitched tiled roof;
- traditional domestic proportions;
- white-painted/finished window and door surrounds;
- a relatively simple arrangement of openings;
- a low front boundary wall; and
- a substantial landscaped setting.

The building is clearly of post-war residential character, rather than being a historic building of high individual architectural significance.

The existing elevations submitted with the application demonstrate that the house has a relatively straightforward architectural form and has already experienced the normal evolution associated with a long-established residential property.

The importance of the property within the Conservation Area therefore lies principally in its townscape relationship and landscaped setting, rather than in exceptional architectural detailing.

3. Character of Coley Avenue

The immediate character of Coley Avenue is strongly influenced by its mature landscape setting.

The submitted site photograph demonstrates that the street has a substantial level of tree canopy, with mature trees and established vegetation providing considerable visual enclosure.

The road itself has a relatively suburban residential character, with houses set behind front gardens and boundary treatments. The mature trees are particularly important because they soften the built form and create a continuous leafy character along the avenue.

At No. 17, the mature vegetation and front boundary wall provide a significant visual buffer between the dwelling and the highway.

This means that the character of the Conservation Area is derived not simply from the architecture of individual houses, but from the **combined relationship between buildings, gardens, mature trees, boundary walls and the avenue itself**.

4. Heritage Significance

The significance of the site can be considered under three principal headings:

Architectural significance

The existing dwelling is a representative mid-20th-century residential building. It is not considered to possess exceptional architectural significance in its own right.

Its simple brick construction, pitched tiled roof and domestic proportions nevertheless contribute positively to the established residential character of the area.

Townscape significance

The property forms part of an established residential frontage along Coley Avenue.

Its scale, position and relationship with the neighbouring properties contribute to the established rhythm of development.

The proposed development has therefore been designed to ensure that the existing dwelling remains identifiable as the principal building.

Landscape significance

The mature tree canopy and vegetation surrounding the property are particularly important.

The photograph of the existing frontage demonstrates the extent to which mature trees visually frame and soften the built environment.

The existing low brick boundary wall, front garden and mature planting form an important part of the property's relationship with the avenue.

The retention of this landscape character is therefore a key consideration in assessing the proposal.

5. Assessment of the Proposed Two-Storey Side Extension

The most substantial element of the proposal is the two-storey side extension.

The extension has been designed as a continuation of the existing dwelling rather than as a visually independent building.

Importantly, the proposed elevations indicate that the **roof form is intended to match the existing roof**, while the proposed brickwork and doors/windows are also intended to match the existing building.

This approach is considered appropriate within the Conservation Area because the extension will read as a coherent enlargement of the existing dwelling.

The extension retains the principal architectural language of the house, including:

- matching brickwork;
- matching roof materials;
- compatible roof pitch;
- compatible window proportions;
- matching external doors/windows; and
- a consistent domestic architectural character.

The proposed side extension is therefore not considered to introduce an alien or competing architectural form.

The existing mature vegetation along the frontage and within the surrounding properties will also assist in visually integrating the enlarged dwelling into the established streetscape.

6. Single-Storey Rear Extension

The proposed single-storey rear extension is substantially less sensitive from a heritage perspective because it is located away from the principal public elevation.

The proposal extends the existing ground-floor accommodation while retaining the principal form and identity of the original house.

Its single-storey height ensures that it remains subordinate to the two-storey dwelling.

The rear extension will have limited visibility from the public highway and will therefore have a very limited effect on the principal character of Coley Avenue.

The proposed rear roof is designed to relate to the existing building, while the proposed materials are intended to match the existing dwelling.

Accordingly, the rear extension is considered to result in no material harm to the heritage significance of the Conservation Area.

7. Front Porch and Entrance

The existing front entrance is an important part of the principal elevation and is retained as part of the proposal.

The proposed alterations are relatively limited and do not involve the removal of the main architectural form of the building.

The front elevation will remain clearly identifiable as the principal elevation of the original dwelling.

The proposed changes will therefore have only a limited effect upon the architectural character of the property.

8. Proposed Juliet Balcony

A Juliet balcony is proposed to the new accommodation.

The balcony is lightweight in appearance and does not create a substantial projecting structure.

It will remain visually subordinate to the main building and is positioned within the context of the enlarged rear/side accommodation.

Its visual effect on the public realm is consequently limited.

The submitted elevation drawings identify the Juliet balcony as part of the proposed first-floor arrangement.

9. Materials and Architectural Integration

The proposed development has been deliberately designed to use materials compatible with the existing dwelling.

The submitted drawings specifically state:

"New bricks to match existing."

and

"New doors/windows to match existing."

The drawings also identify the new roofs as being designed to match the existing roof.

This is an important aspect of the heritage response.

Rather than introducing contrasting contemporary materials, the proposal seeks to ensure that the extensions are visually integrated with the existing 1950s dwelling.

The use of matching materials will ensure that the enlarged building continues to read as a single residential property.

10. Trees and Landscape Character

The mature tree canopy is one of the strongest characteristics of the immediate street scene.

The existing photograph demonstrates that a substantial mature tree is located within the highway verge immediately in front of the property, together with additional mature vegetation around the site and neighbouring properties.

The trees substantially filter views of the buildings and create a strong green framework to the street.

This landscape setting is particularly important in heritage terms because it contributes to the visual character and historic identity of Coley Avenue.

The proposed development should therefore be implemented with the retention and protection of existing mature trees as an important objective.

Where construction works occur close to retained trees, suitable tree protection measures should be implemented in accordance with an appropriate arboricultural methodology.

The proposal does not seek to alter the fundamental tree-lined character of the avenue.

11. Proposed Dropped Kerb

The proposed dropped kerb is the element which has the greatest potential to affect the public-facing character of the site.

However, the proposal is limited to providing vehicular access to the existing front driveway.

The existing front boundary wall and landscaped frontage provide a clear separation between the property and the highway.

The dropped kerb will not result in the wholesale removal of the front garden or a fundamental alteration to the character of the frontage.

The design should retain as much of the existing front boundary treatment and planting as reasonably practicable.

Subject to the separate highways and arboricultural requirements, the proposed access is considered to represent a **minor alteration to the public realm** which would not materially affect the heritage significance of the Conservation Area.

Particular care should be taken to ensure that any works associated with the dropped kerb do not unnecessarily damage the roots of the mature trees within the highway verge.

12. Effect on the Street Scene

The existing photograph demonstrates that the property is viewed within a strongly landscaped street scene.

The mature tree canopy means that individual buildings are experienced as part of a wider sequence of residential properties and vegetation rather than as isolated architectural objects.

The proposed extensions will not fundamentally change this relationship.

The principal roof form remains identifiable, the existing dwelling remains the dominant element and the proposed materials will match the existing building.

The enlarged property will consequently remain compatible with the established residential character of the avenue.

The proposal does not introduce a commercial, institutional or otherwise incongruous form of development.

13. Effect on the Conservation Area

The proposal has been considered against the characteristics which contribute to the significance of the Conservation Area.

These include:

- the established residential character;
- the traditional brick-built houses;
- pitched roof forms;

- established building lines;
- front gardens and boundary walls;
- mature trees and vegetation;
- the leafy character of Coley Avenue; and
- the relationship between buildings and landscape.

The proposal retains these fundamental characteristics.

The rear extension is largely screened from the public realm.

The side extension is designed to integrate with the existing dwelling through matching materials and roof form.

The front alterations are relatively modest.

The proposed dropped kerb is a limited highway intervention and does not require wholesale alteration of the landscaped frontage.

Most importantly, the mature tree canopy which gives the avenue much of its visual identity will continue to provide a strong landscape framework.

14. Level of Heritage Harm

The proposed works are considered to result in no more than a negligible level of heritage impact upon the significance of the Conservation Area.

There is no identified loss of a designated heritage asset.

The existing dwelling is not considered to possess exceptional individual architectural significance.

The proposal retains the principal architectural identity of the house and uses matching materials and roof forms.

The development will not adversely affect the established leafy character of Coley Avenue.

The proposal should therefore be considered to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

15. Conclusion

17 Coley Avenue is an established 1950s residential dwelling which forms part of the wider residential and landscaped character of the Conservation Area.

Although the house is not of exceptional individual architectural significance, it contributes to the established townscape through its scale, brick construction, pitched roof, front boundary and relationship with the mature landscape.

The proposed development has been carefully designed to respect these characteristics.

The two-storey side extension will remain visually related to the original dwelling through the use of matching brickwork, roof form and windows.

The single-storey rear extension will have very limited public visibility.

The porch alteration and Juliet balcony are relatively modest interventions.

The proposed dropped kerb represents a limited change to the frontage and can be undertaken whilst retaining the principal landscaped character of the site.

The extensive mature tree canopy will continue to provide an important landscape framework and visual screening.

Overall, the proposal is considered to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and would not result in harm to its identified heritage significance.

The proposal therefore represents an appropriate and proportionate extension of an established residential property within the Conservation Area.