

29 The Square,
Spencers Wood
HERITAGE STATEMENT
HOUSEHOLDER PLANNING PERMISSION

JETArch Design
100 Berkshire Place
Winnersh Triangle
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG41 5RD

T: 07787296792

E: info@jetarchdesign.co.uk

Desk Top Publishing and Graphic Design
by JETArch Design Limited

This artwork was printed on paper using fibre sourced from sustainable plantation wood from suppliers who practice sustainable management of forests in line with strict international standards. Pulp used in its manufacture is also Elemental Chlorine Free (ECF).

JETArch Design Limited
Copyright

The contents of this document must not be copied or reproduced in whole or in part without the written consent of JETArch Design.

Document Status:	FINAL
Revision:	
Author:	JT
Checked by:	
Authorised by:	JT
Issue Date:	JUL 2026

Contents

1. Introduction	4
1.1 Introduction	
1.2 Site Location and Application Description	
2. Heritage Statement.....	6

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This Heritage statement has been produced by JETArch Design on behalf of Mr & Mrs Galatolo at 29 The Square, Spencers Wood RG7 1BS. It forms part of a comprehensive package of information submitted for a Householder Planning Application for the proposed erection of single-storey rear and side elevation following demolition of existing lean-to extension, erection of front boundary wall, replacement of rear first-floor roof from pitched to flat, changes to fenestration including 1no. rooflight on single-storey side extension at 29 The Square, Spencers Wood RG7 1BS hereinafter referred to as the Site.

1.2 Site Location and Application Description

29 The Square is a modest semi-detached, late Victorian property. It sits within The Square, a designated local Area of Special Character, highlighting late Victorian and early Edwardian architectural heritage.

It is listed as a Undesignated heritage asset that makes a positive contribution to the AoSC.

The designated area is situated off the B3349 in the settlement of Spencers Wood. It lies approximately 7.2km west of Wokingham.

The application proposal seeks the proposed erection of single-storey rear and side elevation following demolition of existing lean-to extension, erection of front boundary wall, replacement of rear first-floor roof from pitched to flat, changes to fenestration including 1no. rooflight on single-storey side extension



Figure 1. Site Location Plan

2. Heritage Statement

1. Introduction

1.1 This Heritage Desk Assessment has been prepared to support a planning application to 29 The Square, Spencers Wood RG7 1BS. It identifies designated and non-designated heritage assets potentially affected by the proposal, outlines their historical and architectural significance, and assesses the potential impact of the development.

1.2 This heritage assessment is written in accordance with paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) “to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.”

1.3 29 The Square is a modest semi-detached, late Victorian dwelling. The property sits on the corner of The Square and is part of the wider planned Victorian development on a strict grid square.

1.4 The Square is a designated Area of Special Character. The AoSC is formed by buildings that are of a consistent period or character, but where a Conservation Area designation is not justified. The area has local value and is locally listed. It was identified through a built environment survey that informed the 1994 Wokingham District Plan. Since then, this local designation and the areas identified were reaffirmed through the adoption of the Managing Development Delivery Document (MDD) in 2014, in accordance with MDD Policy TB26 ‘Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character’.

1.5 The AoSC encompasses The Square, Hyde End Road and Basingstoke Road, as well as The Ashes – a small cul-de-sac in the middle of the Area. The AoSC comprises predominantly two-

storey detached and semi-detached dwellings, two of which have been converted to commercial use as an estate agent and restaurant on the corner of Hyde End Road and Basingstoke Road.

2. Planning Guidance

2.1 Government guidelines regarding listed buildings and conservation areas have changed twice in two years. In 2023 the long-lasting Planning Policy Guidelines Nos.15 and 16 (PPG15 and PPG16) – relating respectively to archaeology and buildings – were amalgamated into a new set of guidelines - Planning Policy Statement No.5 (PPS5).1 This introduced a new term in planning legislation – the ‘heritage asset’. This was identified in the guidance as:

‘A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. Heritage assets are the valued components of the historic environment’.

2.2 Parts of PPS5 were incorporated and regurgitated into a new precis of planning guidance published in June 2023 – the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – which replaced all other separate Planning Policy Guidelines and Planning Policy Statements. Because of the general nature of the new document there has been considerable confusion as to the guidance within it, but in essence, excepting the over-arching concept of presumption in favour of ‘sustainable development’, the heritage aspects have changed little. Much of the existing advice outlined in the earlier guidelines is still deemed to be of relevance and this is summarised best in a guidance note to planning inspectors issued by the Planning Inspectorate, which states that ‘The Framework [i.e. the NPPF] largely carries forward existing planning policies and protections in a significantly more streamlined and accessible form’.

2.3 The main relevant paragraph in the NPPF (largely based on policies HE6- HE8 of PPS5) states that local planning authorities should require applicants:

‘...to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposals on their significance’.

2.4 The National Planning Policy Framework, as a general rule, recommends approval of development unless ‘any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits’.

2.5 Paragraph 195 sets out that Local Planning Authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal taking into account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimize any conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

2.6 Paragraph 202 states where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

2.7 The Wokingham Borough Core Strategy sets out the general principles of development where it impacts heritage assets. Policy CP3 states that planning permission will be granted to proposals that:

‘c) Have no detrimental impact upon important ecological, heritage, landscape (including river valleys) or geological features or water courses.’

2.8 Further guidance is given in Wokingham Borough Development Plan.

2.9 Policy TB26 of the Wokingham Borough Development Plan sets out guidance for buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character.

2.10 The main relevant paragraph of the Development Plan states that:

‘Planning permission will only be granted to or affecting Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character where they demonstrate that they retain and enhance the traditional, historical, local and special character of the building or area and its setting.’

2.11 Paragraph 3.128 states that ‘...development affecting either an Area of Special Character or a Building of Traditional Local Character is proposed, this should protect the architectural integrity of the building and its setting or the special character of the area. Special regard should be given to the historical context, outbuildings, scale, form, massing and materials together with retaining key architectural features or detailing which contribute to the character of the building or the area.’

3. Heritage Impact Principals

3.1 The purpose of a heritage impact assessment (HIA) is to meet the relevant guidance given in the NPPF, Wokingham Core Strategy and Development Plan. These outline the need to inform the planning decisions when considering proposals that have the potential to have some impact on the character or setting of a heritage asset. It is not concerned with other planning issues.

3.2 The nature of the heritage assets and the potential impact upon them through development are both very varied. The heritage assets include both designated heritage assets – such as listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments and conservation area – and non-designated heritage assets, a rather uncomfortable and sometimes subjective category that includes locally listed buildings, field systems and views.

3.3 The degree of impact a proposed development could have on such assets is variable and can sometimes be positive rather than negative. The wide range of possible impacts can include loss of historic fabric, loss of historic character, damage to historic setting, and damage to significant views.

3.4 Under the requirements of the NPPF, the still current advice in the notes that accompanied PPS5, and of other useful relevant guidance, such as English Heritage's Conservation Principles and Informed Conservation, it is necessary to assess the significance of the designated and non-designated heritage assets involved, to understand the nature and extent of the proposed developments, and then to make an objective judgement on the impact that the proposals may have.

3.5 This report is designed, under the guidance of the NPPF, to assess whether the proposed development will have any impact on the setting of these heritage assets and, if so, the degree of such impact. In particular, it is designed to test whether or not any would suffer undue harm to the setting of these heritage assets as outlined in the NPPF 2021.

3.6 Definition of Setting

The latest English Heritage guidance on the setting of heritage assets points out that:

'Setting is not a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation. Its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of a heritage asset. This depends on a wide range of physical elements within, as well as perceptual and associational attributes, pertaining to the heritage asset's surroundings'.

3.7 Setting, as a concept, was clearly defined in PPS5 and in the accompanying Guidance notes –

repeated in the Glossary of the Planning Practice Guidance for the NPPF which define it as:

'The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral'.

3.8 The English Heritage guidance states that setting is not confined entirely to visible elements and views but includes other aspects including environmental considerations and historical relationships between assets:

3.9 'The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by references to visual considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust and vibration; by spatial associations and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places.'

3.10 Definition of Significance

In the glossary of the recently issued (June 2021) new Planning Practice Guidance to the NPPF, significance is defined as:

'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting'.

3.11 Definition of Harm

Whilst there is no strict definition of what constitutes harm in the NPPF, it has been defined in case law. Specifically, the manner in which the significance of a heritage asset could be harmed was summarised in the case of *Bedford Borough Council v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government*, [2012] EWHC 4344 (Admin) (also known as

Poddington):

‘Significance may be harmed through alteration of the asset, i.e. physical harm, or development within its setting, i.e. non-physical or indirect harm. Significance may be lost through destruction of the asset, or, in a very extreme case, development within its setting’.

3.12 The NPPF and its accompanying Planning Practice Guidance effectively distinguish between two degrees of harm to heritage assets – substantial and less than substantial. Substantial harm is considered to be a degree of harm so serious to the significance of the heritage asset, usually involving total or partial destruction of a listed building, for example.

3.13 As the term suggests, less than substantial harm is not as serious and varies in its impact – but it still is an important consideration in assessing planning applications. In the Poddington case the issue related to the impact on the setting of heritage assets and it was concluded that:

‘In the context of non-physical or indirect harm, the yardstick was effectively the same. One was looking for an impact which would have such a serious impact on the significance of the asset that its significance was either vitiated altogether or very much reduced’.

3.14 It should also be stressed that, under the guidelines of the NPPF, ‘change’ does not always equate to ‘harm’ and can be beneficial.

4. History of Spencers Wood

4.1 Spencers Wood developed as a small rural settlement on the edge of the ancient parish of Shinfield, south of Reading. Its name is thought to derive from the Spencer family, who owned land in the area during the medieval period, while the surrounding landscape was largely woodland, heath and farmland.

4.2 For centuries, Spencers Wood remained a small farming community. Local agriculture, together with nearby woodland, shaped both the economy and the character of the village. The historic Basingstoke Road provided an important transport route linking Reading with Hampshire and London.

4.3 During the 19th century, improved transport and the expansion of Reading encouraged gradual growth. New housing, schools, churches and local businesses were established, transforming Spencers Wood from a scattered hamlet into a more recognisable village community.

4.4 Throughout the 20th century, the village expanded steadily as residential development spread south from Reading. Despite this growth, Spencers Wood retained much of its rural setting and village identity, with community facilities developing alongside new housing.

5. Assessment of 29 The Square

5.1 The Square is laid out in an irregular shaped grid and can be characterised as being predominantly residential, comprising two-storey semi-detached and detached buildings with tile roofs and decoratively patterned brickwork on the front and side elevations dating from the late Victorian/early Edwardian eras.

5.2 Wokingham’s Historic Environment Topic Paper summaries the area as having:

‘A mix of red, yellow and grey bricks have been used to create repeating patterns around the windows and doorways, and in some cases, a decorative horizontal line of bricks that visually separates the ground and first floors. The design of the dwellings varies, but all are based on the same three brick colour patterns. It is noted that there has been more recent housing development along The Square at various points, but in each case, buildings have been carefully designed so as to blend in

with the original housing, using the same-coloured bricks and featuring similar brickwork patterns.’

5.3 A further assessment of quality in 1994 noted:

‘consistent theme throughout Square, scale and decoration and relationship to road... red brick with blue brick patterning – chequerboard contrasting detail in pale yellow/cream brick.’

5.4 Number 29 is typical of the character of the area, exhibiting many of the features listed above. Detailing is provided through the use of contrasting yellow/cream bricks forming banding and framing to windows with polychrome brickwork. This detailing is far more modest than some of the other properties which all display small differences and variations to their detailing.

5.5 The differences between floor plans and elevational treatments are typical of Victorian Patter Books and suggest either a variation proposed by the developer or chosen by clients.

5.6 The windows to number 29 are typical Victorian horned sashes painted white, with the characteristic thin glazing bars, allowing for larger panes of glass.

5.7 traditional slates adorn the roof, with simple eaves and a prominent chimney shared with the neighbour. The chimney has stepped brick bands and crowned yellow/cream pots.

5.8 The side elevation has a decorative timber barge board and finial painted white.

5.9 Towards the rear of the property is a lean-to and extensions

providing a bathroom which do not exhibit and significant architectural detailing.

6. Proposal and Impact

6.1 This proposal seeks to demolish the rear lean-to to enable it to be rebuilt and incorporated into the new single storey rear and side extension. The roof to the rear first floor extension housing the bathroom will be raised and changed to a flat roof.

6.2 The extension will be single storey and so modest and subservient in its scale and massing. This is in contrast to the latest approved planning application for a large two storey rear and side extension which doubles the size of the property. There is therefore a clear definition between the existing property and the proposed extension.

6.3 Traditional features such as windows, brick detailing and the barge board will be retained and will be largely unaffected by the works. The proposal is set towards the rear of the property, maintaining the front elevation and street scene.

6.4 Red facing brickwork is proposed to match the existing house. A flat roof keeps the profile of the extension as low and subservient as possible, whilst also providing a contrast between existing and proposed.

7. Conclusion

7.1 This proposal is modest in its massing and scale and retains a suitable level of subservience to the host dwelling. The material used compliment the existing house, whilst avoiding a pastiche recreation. The extension provides a clear definition between the existing and proposed, maintaining a historical record of the property. Important architectural features will be retained. There it is concluded that the proposal is acceptable in terms of its impact upon the existing dwelling and Area of Special Character.

