
MEMORANDUM

From:	Built Heritage Officer		
Service	Green Infrastructure	App No:	242160
Address:	203 Beech Lane, Earley, Wokingham, RG6 5UP		
Proposal:	Householder application for proposed part single and part double storey rear extensions to existing dwelling.		
Heritage Assets:	203 Beech Lane – Non designated heritage asset (NDHA)		
Site Visit Made:	Roadside only		

Summary Of Recommendations

- Objection to bulk, scale and massing
- Further information required

Comments On Proposal

The proposed development consists of the erection of a part single and part two storey extension, as well as internal alteration to no. 203 Beech Lane. The building is really very interesting, being an extremely rare surviving historic structure in the now heavily developed Earley. Whilst further research is required, the building – historically two cottages – dates from at least the early 19th century, and possibly earlier. Historically known as ‘Homefarm Cottages’, the thatched building is understood to contain a number of historic timbers and a considerable central brick chimney stack. By virtue of its age, architectural and historic interest, as well as the positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area, 203 Beech Lane is identified as a non-designated heritage asset (NHDA). Given this, the application is mandatorily required to provide an assessment of the heritage asset’s significance and thus the proposal’s impact upon this significance – known as a heritage statement – as per the requirement of para. 200 of the NPPF (Dec 2023). Such an assessment should be undertaken by an adequately qualified and experienced heritage professional.

Notwithstanding the absent heritage assessment, any proposals should be informed by, and should respond sensitively to, those aspects of the heritage asset which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. It is important to note that character and appearance is not restricted to the public realm but encompasses the entire area as a whole.

Part of the significance of the building is drawn from that fact it was simple workers cottages, modest in size, but decorative in appearance. The proposed alterations substantially alter the side and rear of the building and result in the loss of the

extant architectural detail and form. Whilst the building has been altered, this does not equate to a carte blanche for future alteration. To the contrary, where alterations – some of which unsympathetic – have occurred in the past, there is a greater emphasis in preserving the remaining significance and thus managing alterations appropriately and in line with local policy and guidance.

The increased massing of the two-storey element would seek to dominant and engulf the existing simple building and, as a consequence, impact the neighbouring properties. The relative simplicity of the rear (and side) elevations and thatched roof pitches form part of the NDHA's significance, and thus to extend it by this amount, would severely overly aggrandise and erode the character. The form and thus interest of the thatched roof would be lost, along with important original architectural details such as the original rear walling. The proposals are not proportional to the host, unbalanced and would result in a preponderant form, harming the significance of the building and setting of others. Any proposed alteration should respond sensitively to the design of (a historic) building, for example in terms of the pattern of openings within it, its rhythm, massing, dimensions, scale and proportions, its horizontal or vertical emphasis, and the complexity or simplicity, humble nature, and formality or informality of its design.

Given the identified harm, the proposed development would conflict with Policy CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy and Policy TB24 of the Managing Development Delivery local plan.

As such, an objection is to the application due to the arising harm to the identified heritage asset, lack of information supplied with the application, and thus refusal is recommended.

Conditions			
N/A			
Date:	11/10/2024	Signed:	Roderick McDonald Built Heritage Officer