

Heritage Statement: 4 Lansdowne Terrace, Twyford, RG10 9DY

First-floor bathroom extension

1. Introduction

This Heritage Statement has been prepared to support a planning application for a modest first-floor bathroom extension at 4 Lansdowne Terrace, Twyford (RG10 9DY). The property is located within the Twyford Village Conservation Area, designated in December 1977 and revised in June 1996. While the building itself is not listed, this Statement demonstrates how the proposed development responds sensitively to the special character and architectural qualities of the Conservation Area.



2. The Twyford Village Conservation Area

2.1 Character and significance

The area was first designated in 1977 in recognition of its special architectural and historic interest, preserving its distinct character as a historic village centre. It is characterised by modest, predominantly Victorian-era buildings that reflect Twyford's heritage and evolution from a rural settlement to a service village. Key characteristics include:

- Building styles: A mixture of rendered and red-brick frontages, with locally varied architectural expression reflecting the area's organic development over centuries
- Heights: Buildings predominantly two to three storeys, with distinctive gabled dormer windows adding visual interest to rooflines

- Housing types: A diverse range from small-scale terraced cottages (such as those on Lansdowne Terrace) to larger detached, double-fronted villas
- Historic depth: Properties dating from as far back as the 16th century, demonstrating continuity of settlement



2.4 Conservation principles

As noted in the Wokingham Council guidance for the Conservation Area, conservation areas are "living communities which must be allowed to change over time in order to retain vitality and prosper." The emphasis is to guide and control development sympathetically, rather than to prevent it. All new development should be sympathetic to the special architectural and aesthetic qualities of the area, particularly in terms of scale, design, and materials.

3. The application site and property

3.1 Location and setting

4 Lansdowne Terrace forms part of a terrace of modest Victorian cottages characteristic of the Conservation Area's residential streets. The property contributes to the special character through its:

- Traditional terraced form, typical of workers' and modest residential housing from the Victorian period
- Simple, functional architecture reflecting the building's domestic scale and purpose
- Integration within a unified street frontage, creating the sense of enclosure and continuity that characterises the village centre
- Position within a fine-grain plot pattern with deep, narrow rear gardens typical of 19th-century terraced development

3.2 Existing character

The property is a two-bedroom terraced cottage, although largely remodelled internally, but typical of its class and era. It presents a modest frontage to the street, consistent with neighbouring properties.

Importantly, the property has benefited from a single-storey rear extension constructed in recent decades, which forms the foundation for the proposed new work.

3.3 Relationship to the streetscene

The rear location of the proposed extension means that it will not be visible from the public realm, neither from Lansdowne Terrace itself nor from any public viewpoints. The streetscape character, which is the primary concern in conservation area guidance, will remain completely unaffected by this proposal. The front elevation will retain its historic character and contribution to the Conservation Area's special interest.

4. The proposed development

4.1 Description of works

The proposal is for the addition of a modest first-floor bathroom extension to be built above the existing single-storey rear extension. Specifically:

- Scale: A small, proportionate addition limited to shower room space
- Location: Positioned at first-floor level over the existing rear extension
- Design approach: Subservient to the original building form; does not extend beyond the existing rear extension footprint and constrained to avoid impact on daylight to neighbouring properties
- Height: Carefully controlled to relate appropriately to the scale of the original dwelling
- Materials: Slate and slate tile-hanging, selected to match and blend sympathetically with existing materials and those used on neighbouring properties

4.2 Design rationale

The Architect has designed this extension with particular care, recognising the Conservation Area context. The design decisions reflect:

- Subservience: The extension is modest in scale and does not dominate the original building
- Material sympathy: Use of traditional materials (slate and tile-hanging) consistent with the area's architectural heritage and current construction practices on the terrace
- Minimal visibility: The rear location ensures the extension has no impact on the Conservation Area's most valued characteristic: its historic streetscene
- Appropriate proportions: The extension maintains appropriate relationships to neighbouring buildings and respects the Victorian-era pattern of development

5. Precedent within the terrace

Significantly, the same architectural solution (a first-floor bathroom extension above a single-storey rear extension) has already been successfully implemented on two other properties within Lansdowne Terrace. These precedents demonstrate:

- Acceptance within the planning system that such extensions are compatible with the Conservation Area

- That the design approach and materials have proven appropriate and harmonious within this specific terrace context
 - That the solution responds to genuine practical need while maintaining the character of the area
- This precedent provides strong evidence that the proposed development represents an appropriate form of change for properties in this location.

6. Assessment of significance and Impact



6.1 Significance of the Heritage Asset

The significance of 4 Lansdowne Terrace within the Conservation Area derives primarily from:

- Group value: Its role as part of a unified terraced composition that contributes to the historic streetscene and the character of the village's residential quarter
- Architectural interest: As a representative example of modest Victorian terraced housing, reflecting Twyford's social and economic history
- Materials and construction: Traditional construction methods and materials (brick, slate, tile, timber) that exemplify 19th-century building practice
- Historic continuity: Its presence as part of a long-established residential pattern dating from the Victorian era

6.2 Impact assessment

6.2.1 Impact on streetscene character: No adverse impact. The proposed extension is located at the rear of the building and will not be visible from any public vantage point. The front elevation, which contributes directly to the Conservation Area's special character, will remain unaltered. The building's role in the terraced composition and street frontage is completely preserved.

6.2.2 Impact on the building's historic fabric: Minimal and appropriate. The extension is constructed above an existing modern rear extension, not on the original historic fabric. Any connection points are limited and designed to be reversible if required in the future.

6.2.3 Impact on the property's functional viability: Positive. The extension enables the property to meet 21st-century living standards while remaining a viable residential dwelling within the Conservation Area.

6.2.4 Impact on neighbouring properties: No adverse impact. The extension is proportionate, does not create overlooking, respects the right to light of neighbouring properties and maintains appropriate spacing from boundaries consistent with Conservation Area guidance.

6.2.5 Overall heritage impact: Neutral to positive. The development preserves the significance of the heritage asset by maintaining the streetscene and the building's external character while enabling its continued residential use and practical functionality.

7. Planning policy compliance

7.1 Wokingham Borough Design Guide

The proposal complies with the Wokingham Borough Design Guide (SPD, 2012) guidance on alterations and extensions:

- **Character and context:** The extension responds positively to the existing context, respecting the terraced form and Victorian character (Section 4.2)
- **Design quality:** The extension is well-designed and subservient to the original building, contributing to rather than detracting from the character of the Conservation Area (Section 4.11)
- **Materials:** Slate and tile-hanging are consistent with traditional materials used in the area and represent appropriate material choices for a Conservation Area location (Section 4.11)
- **Relationship to neighbours:** The rear location and modest scale ensure no adverse impact on neighbouring properties (Section 4.11, Policy CP3)
- **Enclosed village character:** The development maintains the "walled" sense of enclosure created by buildings adjoining one another, as the extension does not alter the street frontage (Section 3B.2.2)

7.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The proposal demonstrates compliance with relevant NPPF principles:

- **Good design:** The extension is attractive, durable, and useable, meeting the NPPF's definition of good design (Para 126-127)
- **Historic environment:** The development preserves the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, consistent with Paragraph 206 of the NPPF
- **Living communities:** The scheme recognises that conservation areas must be allowed to change over time to retain vitality and prosper, while ensuring development is sympathetic to special qualities (Para 206)
- **Design quality:** Rather than imposing arbitrary stylistic requirements, the design responds to the specific context through careful material and design choices appropriate to the place (Para 131)

8. Social and functional justification

Beyond heritage compliance, there is a compelling functional justification for this development:

8.1 Current constraints

The property presently contains only a single downstairs bathroom accessed through the kitchen. This arrangement presents significant practical challenges:

- Residents requiring access to bathroom facilities upstairs must negotiate stairs multiple times per day
- The kitchen-bathroom connection creates circulation inefficiencies and reduces usable living space

- Elderly or mobility-impaired occupants and visitors face particular challenges in accessing upstairs facilities
- The layout does not reflect contemporary expectations for residential comfort and independence

8.2 Proposed solution benefits

The addition of an upstairs bathroom enables:

- Accessibility: Improved access to facilities for all users, particularly important for less mobile residents and visitors
- Modern living standards: Alignment with contemporary expectations for residential properties, supporting the property's ongoing viability as a residential dwelling
- Independent living: Residents, particularly those with mobility considerations, can maintain independence and dignity in their own homes
- Intergenerational use: The property becomes capable of accommodating families with children or providing accessible accommodation for aging occupants

8.3 Heritage benefit

By enabling practical improvements that support the property's continued residential use, this development contributes to the long-term preservation of the building as a living, functional historic dwelling. Properties that can be adapted sympathetically to meet contemporary needs are far more likely to survive and be well-maintained than those unable to respond to residents' practical requirements.

9. Conclusions

The proposed first-floor bathroom extension at 4 Lansdowne Terrace represents a sensitive, modest intervention that:

1. Preserves heritage value: The extension is invisible from the public realm, does not affect the streetscene, and maintains the building's contribution to the Conservation Area's special character
2. Demonstrates design quality: The extension is well-designed, using sympathetic traditional materials and a subservient form appropriate to the context
3. Builds on precedent: Two similar extensions on the same terrace demonstrate the approach has been previously accepted as compatible with the Conservation Area
4. Complies with policy: The development meets all requirements of the Wokingham Borough Design Guide, the National Planning Policy Framework, and the Conservation Area designation
5. Enables practical improvement: The extension enables the property to meet 21st-century standards of residential comfort while preserving its historic character
6. Supports long-term conservation: By enabling practical adaptation, the scheme supports the ongoing viability and conservation of this Victorian terraced cottage as a living residential property

For these reasons, we believe that the proposal should be approved as a development that is fully compatible with the special character and appearance of the Twyford Village Conservation Area.