

Historical significance statement for 78 Hewlett Road in relation to proposed basement rear external sash window replacement by a door and addition of steps to garden level

Application 24/00440/LBC and 24/00440/FUL.

Location and map references

78 Hewlett Road is a mid-terrace house comprising two storeys on a basement and built in the early 1830s.

The terrace, formally known as *Jersey Place*, does not appear on the Post Office 1820 map but is shown on Henry Merretts' 1834 map.

Jersey Place is described in some detail by the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society Cheltenham Gazetteer as a Terrace of 13 houses 68 to 92 together with a corner shop. No historical event, persons or significance is attributed to *Jersey Place* in the Gazetteer entry.

Historic England

The Historic England listing for the terrace is reproduced in Table 1.

<i>SO9522SE HEWLETT ROAD 630-1/15/387 (North West side) Nos.68-92 (Even) and attached railings</i>	<i>NUMBERS 68 TO 92 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS, 68 TO 92, HEWLETT ROAD</i>
<i>Terrace of 13 houses and attached railings. c1820-50 with later additions and alterations. Stucco (unpainted in parts) over brick with slate roofs where original, brick and stucco party-wall stacks and iron railings. Double-depth plan with service ranges to rear. EXTERIOR: 2 storeys on basement, some with attics to rear, 3 first-floor windows each. First-floor band; moulded frieze where original, continuous cornice with coped blocking course. 6/6 sashes where original, some 1/1 horned sashes; all in plain reveals and with sills. Basement has 4/8 and 10/10 sashes where original. Entrances to left: 6-raised-and-fielded-panel doors where original (some part-glazed), with lattice and reeded friezes and fanlights with a wide variety of decorative glazing including batwing and circe, lattice, web and radial glazing bars. Rear retains 6/6 sashes. INTERIOR: noted as retaining original plasterwork and joinery. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: arrowhead railings between houses, several with dogbars and urn finials to stanchions. Area railings have scrolled lozenge (No.72), sticks (84 and 86), X-motif (88) and arrowhead (90). Forms a continuous terrace with No.66 Hewlett Road (qv), a good artisan terrace on one of the approach roads into Cheltenham.</i>	

Table 1 Historic England listing for 78 Hewlett Road, Cheltenham

References

Section 16 *Conserving and enhancing the historic environment* Paragraph 200 of the National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG: 2023) (NPPF).

The Historic England “Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance”

The listing summary

The listing (Table 1) describes various aspects of the terrace relating to the stucco, frieze, cornice, windows, main entrance doors and railings.

Focusing on the basement, only a single short sentence makes a reference to rear windows, and these are described variously as 6/6 sashes where original. The listing does not ascribe originality to any 1/1 sashes whereas it is explicit in this respect in reference to 4/8, 6/6 and 10/10 sashes. It does not mention 2/2 sashes at all.

Prominence

The building is one of many constructed during the early 19th century building boom within the Cheltenham central area and is in the late Georgian architectural style typical of the period.

- i. There are no unique or compelling features of the property which make it significantly different to many others of the same period in the locality.
- ii. There are no significant or notable historical events, locations or persons associated with 78 Hewlett Road, *Jersey Place* or that part of Hewlett Road.
- iii. There are no Blue or Green plaques associated with 78 Hewlett Road, *Jersey Place* or that part of Hewlett Road

The proposal will therefore have no impact the historical record of the locality.

Aesthetic value

The listing implicitly ascribes significance to the general visual appearance of the terrace by focusing on and describing various exterior aspects primarily concerning the frontage and railings with minor mention of attics to the rear.

- i. The current sash window in the basement rear (being 2/2) does not match that described as rear originals (6/6) in the listing and this tallies with the suggestion that the present sash is not original.
- ii. The basement of 78 Hewlett Road, being entirely below ground level, is only visible on close approach to the front of the property and does not form part of the general aspect of the terrace from afar.
- iii. To the rear, the basement is also entirely below ground level. No part of the rear basement or rear basement sash window opening is visible from the public realm, including long distance from the hills on the outskirts of Cheltenham.
In addition, no part of the rear basement or rear basement sash window opening is visible from any neighbouring property.
- iv. The lack of visibility of the rear basement window is a result of:
 - a. Being below ground level.
 - b. Being set back by 6' from the rear building line of the two neighbouring properties.
 - c. View obscured by the presence of 6' to 7' high brick walls on all three sides of the narrow rear garden.
 - d. The relatively low height of upper story windows on properties to the rear.

In conclusion: The proposed replacement of the rear basement window with a door, and addition of external steps to the door, will not be visible or alter the aesthetic value or appearance of the property from any neighbouring properties or the public realm near or afar.

In terms of the asset itself the proposal retains the existing opening location and observable dimensions in keeping with the rest of the rear aspect. The design of the rear steps is not incongruous with the architectural period being of solid paved construction.

The proposal will therefore not alter the aesthetic significance implied by the listing or of the asset itself. It will not be incongruous with the setting of the asset since other properties in the terrace have basement doorway access with steps to the rear and this feature is typical of the architecture of the period.

Physical fabric

The physical fabric is considered in terms of the window itself, its associated opening in the rear basement wall and the new external steps in the rear garden.

The window

- i. The basement rear sash window is 2/2 and made of wood which has been painted but otherwise poorly maintained over the years. The sash window is nonfunctional due to material rot and broken mechanism, being nailed in place and secured by a metal mesh.
- ii. The larger paned 2/2 sashes and box frame are in a style different to every other window in the property which all have small pane sashes. The other 'utility' windows in the property are 3/3 sashes and the larger windows are either 6/6 or 8/8.
- iii. The window is below ground in direct contact with an external wall with no dampness protection and has consequently suffered from extensive rot, the rear wall being very damp to the touch. Due to the direct wall to soil contact, significant dampness, and lack of any treatment it is believed that this window would deteriorate relatively rapidly.
- iv. It is not possible to determine with absolute certainty if the wood fabric is the original 1830s installation since there are no records. It is a fact that the current installation has been there long enough to suffer extensive degradation in a wet setting.

In conclusion: Based on i) to iv) above the reasonable suggestion is that the existing nonfunctional window is itself a replacement, possibly in the later Victorian larger paned 2/2 style seen in nearby streets, and that the material and design are not original.

With reference to The Historic England Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance the important aspects of the fabric would be materials, design, and method of construction.

There is no significance/importance that could be reasonably ascribed to the actual window for certain and it is likely not original in design or fabric due to reasons given above.

Reinstatement of the window as a periodic renewal of nonfunctioning fabric at some future date is easily feasible since the opening dimension and construction is not being altered in the existing window opening area.

The opening

- i. The existing window wall opening has 'check reveal' brickwork and the outer dimension is 0.97 m width by 1.35 m height with a shallow brick arch lintel and 11-courses (0.88 m) of brick below the opening cill height to the basement floor. The wall thickness is 380 mm. (all dimensions taken from measured survey). Externally the lightwell has a dedicated rainwater drain which runs directly under the existing window opening.
- ii. It is proposed:
 - a. to retain the existing opening position unaltered.
 - b. to retain the existing opening width and 'check reveal' brickwork unaltered.
 - c. to retain the existing opening lintel height and arched brickwork unaltered.
 - d. to remove 11-courses of brick directly below the existing window opening representing a volume 0.32 m³ from the original 1830s property volume of 552 m³.
 - e. to retain existing below basement floor level foundation brickwork unaltered.
 - f. to install the new door within the original 'check reveal' opening width.
 - g. to construct external steps from the basement level to the existing rear garden level.
- iii. No additions to the existing window opening brick fabric are required or proposed.
- iv. No 'structural' changes to the window opening are required or proposed. By this it is meant that no beam work, no lintel, no foundation or underpinning, and no reinforcement is required to the existing fabric.
- v. The existing external rainwater drain run is retained with a lowering of the inlet to the basement floor level.

In conclusion: Based on i) to v) above the extent of loss/change of fabric is confined only to the 11-courses of brick directly below the existing window opening since the existing 'check reveal' opening width, height and arched lintel are being retained unaltered and without any additions to the fabric.

The position, structure and aspect of the opening is not being changed and future reinstatement of the below opening brickwork would therefore be easily possible.

With reference to The Historic England Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance the important aspects of the fabric would be materials, design, and method of construction.

The construction elements of the opening are being preserved unaltered with a minimal change/loss of fabric that is easily reversible in the future and no additions.

The appearance of the opening in its relation and aspect to other nearby openings in the property is preserved since the position, width, lintel height, and general shape are unaltered.

Rear basement door access is not incongruous with the original setting since it is present in most other properties within the terrace and typical of the period generally for this size of house.

National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG: 2023) (NPPF)

Section 16 *Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*: Paragraph 200

Local historical and other records have been consulted (maps, listings, searches etc.).

The contribution of the assets setting, and significance has been described in detail; Local records (page 1), Prominence (page 2) and Aesthetic value (page 3).

In Summary:

The significance and contribution of the asset is primarily:

- i) Its presence and appearance within the townscape vista of the locality. In this respect, and reflected by the Historic England listing detail, this relates to the location within the terrace, the frontage, and railings.
- ii) As an example of a house in the late Georgian architectural style.

No notable event, persons or locations connected to the asset or the terrace as whole have been found in any historical or other records.

Impact of the proposal

The impact on the asset is considered in terms of the fabric, setting and historical record.

The level of loss, namely fabric loss, amounts to 11-courses of brick directly under the existing window opening to basement floor level and the window box/sash itself. In both cases the loss is easily reversible without requiring further changes to the historic fabric.

In the case of the actual window box/sash:

Considered to be not the original fabric and not functional/repairable, refer to page 4.

Not visible from any neighbouring property or the public realm.

The reversibility of the change in this part is under the Historic England "Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance" *Periodic Renewal* of nonfunctional fabric.

In the case of the existing opening the impact is minimal:

Removal of 11-courses of brick (0.32 m³) directly under the existing window opening.

Using existing opening without the need to change the position, width, or lintel height.

Retention of the 'check reveal', arched lintel and under basement floor level brickwork.

No structural changes.

Not visible from any neighbouring property or the public realm.

Reversibility by rebuilding the brick courses on the retained foundation bricks using suitable heritage materials. No structural changes to the opening mean there is nothing to undo in that respect.

In the case of the new external steps the impact is minimal:

No change to historic fabric or curtilage boundary.

Not visible from any neighbouring property or the public realm.

Do not extend beyond rear building line of neighbouring properties.

Reversible by demolition and infill without any further change to historic fabric.

In terms of the individual asset and its setting the impact is minimal:

Not visible from outside the curtilage.

Easily reversible with minimal fabric loss (bricks) and no structural change.

Opening location and proportions are retained.

Change from window to door for rear basement access is not incongruous with this or other properties in the terrace, or with the architectural period generally.

Not altering the architectural style of the property.

In terms of the historical record, no impact is found from extensive searches, refer to page 2.

Securing optimum viable use

An important aspect of conservation is the consideration given to sustainable, affordable, and viable use to ensure that the asset can be maintained over time.

The homeowner has recently returned the basement to its original 1830s purpose, namely as the kitchen for the whole dwelling.

The provision of rear access directly from the basement to outside ground level will serve several purposes:

- i) Provide of a direct fire escape route from the rear of the basement to the outside without the need to climb through a window up to ground level.
- ii) Substantially increase the amount of natural light entering the rear of the basement.
- iii) Significantly enhance the general amenity of the basement by providing direct access to the rear garden.

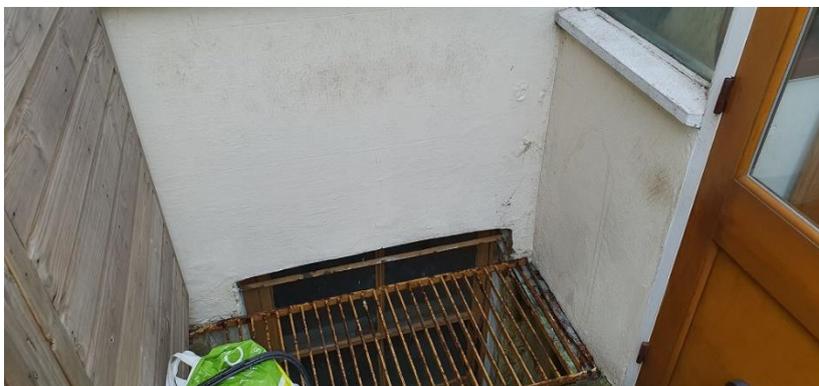
Conclusion

The proposal is designed to minimise the impact on the heritage asset and in particular preservation of the existing opening.

In considering the impact of the proposal it is reasonable to conclude that significantly less than substantial harm is proposed and that the change is easily reversible without requiring further additional changes to the original fabric.

The aesthetic value and historical record are not impacted, and the proposal secures optimal viable use going forward.

Rear basement window

	<p>There is good reason to surmise that this is a replacement window. It does not match the small paned style of the others in the terrace.</p> <p>Due to the direct wall to soil contact and significant dampness and lack of any treatment it is believed that this window would deteriorate relatively rapidly and therefore more likely to have been replaced.</p> <p>The small opening to ground level severely restricts natural light entering the rear of the basement.</p>
	<p>The back basement wall is underground and in direct contact with the soil.</p> <p>The back wall is very damp, there is no damp protection.</p> <p>There is extensive rot all around the frame.</p> <p>The window is nonfunctional with a broken mechanism.</p>
	<p>Exterior photo showing view down into the window.</p> <p>The curve of the shallow arch lintel can be seen.</p>