

Heritage Statement – 246 Main Rd, Romford RM2 5EU

1. Introduction

This Heritage Statement supports an application at 246A Main Road, Romford, for internal alterations to reconfigure an existing 1-bedroom flat into a 2-bedroom flat, and minor external alterations to the rear first-floor entrance door and window. The property lies within the Romford Conservation Area, which is designated due to its special architectural and historic interest and is subject to additional planning controls to preserve and enhance its character and appearance.

2. Heritage asset and significance

246A Main Road forms part of the historic urban fabric of Romford, close to the town centre and within a conservation area that reflects Romford's development as a historic market town and commercial centre. The area is characterised by a mix of traditional buildings along the main routes, with varied architectural styles, plot widths, and historic frontages that collectively contribute to the townscape.

The significance of the conservation area lies principally in its historic street pattern, the scale and form of buildings enclosing key streets and spaces, and surviving historic elevations facing the public realm, together with important views within and into the area. The rear elevations and secondary facades typically make a more limited contribution to the area's special interest, provided that their form and materials remain broadly compatible with the established character.

3. Description of proposals

The proposals comprise:

- Internal works at first-floor level to reconfigure the existing 1-bedroom layout into a 2-bedroom flat, involving new lightweight partitions, adjusted door openings, and associated services.
- Minor alterations to the rear elevation, including replacement and adjustment of the existing first-floor rear entrance door and adjacent window to suit the revised internal layout, with no change to the overall footprint, height, or roof form of the building.

No changes are proposed to the principal elevation facing Main Road, and no extensions, additional storeys, or demolition of structural external walls are included in the scheme.

4. Sources and approach

The assessment of significance and impact draws on publicly available information on the Romford Conservation Area, including the council's conservation area appraisal/management plan and general heritage guidance, supplemented by a visual inspection of the building and its surroundings. For a modest internal scheme of this nature, national guidance accepts a proportionate level of detail, and the statement has been prepared to reflect the limited scale and heritage sensitivity of the works.

5. Impact on significance

The internal alterations are entirely within the existing building envelope and will not be visible in public views; they will not affect the external appearance of the building as experienced in the conservation area. Internal re-planning using lightweight partitions is typically regarded as having minimal heritage impact where no identified significant historic plan form or features are removed.^{[7][5]}

The external changes are confined to the rear first-floor entrance door and window, on a secondary elevation that does not form part of the principal public frontage along Main Road. Provided that the new door and window match or are closely compatible with the existing in size, proportions, and materials, the character and appearance of the conservation area will be preserved and there will be no material effect on important views or the wider townscape. The proposal therefore results in no harm, or at most a very low level of "less than substantial" harm at the lowest end of the scale, which is outweighed by the benefit of providing an improved and more efficient residential layout within an existing building.

6. Avoidance and minimisation of harm

The design has been developed to avoid changes to the principal elevation and to retain the existing building envelope, thus protecting the established scale, massing, and contribution of the property to the conservation area. External alterations are limited to the rear, using like-for-like or sympathetic materials and detailing so that the rear elevation remains coherent and recessive in longer views.^{[5][7][8]}

Internally, the scheme seeks to retain structural walls and any surviving features of interest where practicable, limiting works largely to new partitions and services to achieve the additional bedroom. This approach aligns with national guidance that development in conservation areas should be informed by an understanding of significance and should be designed to preserve or enhance that significance.

7. Proportionate conclusion

Given the minor, largely internal nature of the works and the restriction of visible changes to a rear elevation of limited townscape prominence, the proposal preserves the character and appearance of the Romford Conservation Area. The level of information and analysis provided is proportionate to the importance of the asset and the modest scale of the development, and is suitable to stand alone or be incorporated as a heritage section within a combined Design and Access / Heritage Statement.