

PL/26/0252 - 2 MILL GREEN

CADRA objects in the strongest terms to this retrospective application. The unauthorized rear extension causes demonstrable harm to a **Locally Listed asset**, and the proposed conversion to a **House in Multiple Occupation (HMO)** is an inappropriate use for a building designed as a cohesive family home in a predominantly family-oriented residential area.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

This property is a rare and exceptional example of **1930s Moderne architecture**. Its significance is explicitly tied to its integrity; the listing description emphasizes that the building "*remains unaltered externally and preserves all of its original features.*" Unlike many heritage assets where some change is expected, the value of this specific building lies in its complete and unchanged state.

The listing considers the house, the "thoughtfully designed" garage, and the "spacious green garden" as a single integrated composition. The relationship between these three elements is what constitutes the site's unique cultural value.

IMPACT OF THE UNAUTHORIZED EXTENSION

The extension fundamentally undermines the primary reason for the building's heritage status under **Local Plan Policy EN4**:

- **Irreversible Loss of Character:** By introducing an external addition, the "unaltered" status of the building—its defining characteristic—has been permanently compromised.
- **Encroachment on Setting:** The extension encroaches upon the garden, which the listing identifies as a "spacious" and "attractive setting." This is not merely a loss of amenity space, but a material erosion of the building's historic context.
- **Severance of Design:** The scale and materials of the extension disrupt the visual and spatial link between the main house and the garage, fracturing what the listing protects as a coherent design.

INAPPROPRIATE USE AND COMMUNITY BALANCE

The applicant claims a need for "shared accommodation," yet this part of Caversham is characterized by its stable, family-oriented residential nature.

- **Loss of Family Housing:** Reading's **Local Plan Policy H2** (and the 2025/2026 Update) emphasizes the urgent need to protect and provide family-sized dwellings of three or more bedrooms. Converting this property to an HMO results in the loss of a high-quality family home, running contrary to the Council's goal of maintaining a sustainable mix of housing.
- **2026 HMO Licensing:** Under the **Borough-wide Additional HMO Licensing** scheme (effective March 1, 2026), the Council has a mandate to ensure HMOs do not negatively impact neighbourhood character. The intensified use of this specific heritage asset is incompatible with its architectural intent and the low-density character of Mill Green.

PROCEDURAL CONCERNS AND THE RETROSPECTIVE TREND

CADRA is concerned by what seems to be an increasing frequency of retrospective applications. The "unaltered" status of this property is a matter of public record; therefore, the applicant should reasonably have been expected to establish the necessity of consent before undertaking works.

If the Council permits significant harm to an "exceptional and rare" building simply because the work has already been completed, it risks undermining the authority of the Local List entirely. We urge the Council to ensure that a formal consultation with the **Conservation Officer** is conducted.

IMPACT OF HMO INFRASTRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT

If the Council is minded to grant permission, CADRA requests that stringent conditions are attached to mitigate the intensified use of the site. The requirements for an HMO differ significantly from those of a single-family dwelling, and the following must be addressed to protect the building's heritage character:

- **External Services and Visual Clutter:** The conversion must not lead to a proliferation of external downpipes, soil vent pipes, cabling, or telecommunications equipment. Such additions would further erode the "unaltered" exterior that defines this Moderne building. We request a condition requiring all new services to be internal or strictly concealed.
- **Refuse and Waste Management:** The increased occupancy of an HMO inevitably generates higher volumes of waste. We request that the applicant provides a comprehensive **Refuse Management Plan**. This must include high-quality, screened storage that does not detract from the "attractive setting" of the garden or the visual relationship between the house and the garage.
- **Occupancy Impact:** The lifestyle and operational requirements of multiple independent households differ from those of a cohesive family unit. We ask that the Council considers the impact of increased "coming and going" and the potential for external clutter (such as bicycle storage), ensuring these do not further degrade the character of this locally listed asset.

These HMO-related matters and the associated negative impacts only strengthen the case for refusing the application in its entirety.

CONCLUSION

"Exceptional and rare" are not descriptors used lightly in the Local List. To approve this application would be to accept the piecemeal destruction of one of the borough's best-preserved 20th-century buildings for a use that does not fit the area.

CADRA objects and requests that the Council refuses both the retrospective extension and the change of use. We further request that the Council pursues the removal of the extension and the full reinstatement of the garden to its original condition, as evidenced by the site's state in 2014.

