

# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 April 2016

**by Chris Couper BA (Hons) DiP TP MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government**

**Decision date: 08 April 2016**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/D/16/3142571**

**49 Cumberland Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 3LB**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by Mr Amjad Mehmood against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
  - The application Ref 151522, dated 21 August 2015, was refused by notice dated 16 November 2015.
  - The development proposed is single storey (flat roofed) rear extensions (kitchen and bathroom) and 2 front elevation main roof dormers.
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## Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

## Procedural matter

2. The single storey rear extensions are already in place, whilst the two dormers in the front elevation have not been constructed.

## Main Issues

3. The main issues are i) the effect of the development on the living conditions of the adjacent occupiers at nos. 47 and 51 Cumberland Road, and whether or not existing and future occupants of the host property would experience satisfactory living conditions with regards to the amount of rear amenity space; and ii) the effect of the existing and proposed development on the character and appearance of the host property and the area.

## Reasons

### *Living conditions*

4. No. 49 Cumberland Road ('no. 49') sits in the middle of a terraced row. To the rear, many of the dwellings have been significantly altered and extended, and I observed on my visit various nearby single storey and two storey projections. The host property has itself been previously extended, and has a deep single storey flat roofed extension, which is attached to a two storey projection. Those projections are set in from the boundary with no. 51 Cumberland Road ('no. 51'), but abut the boundary with no. 47 Cumberland Road ('no. 47').

5. As a result of this scheme the dwelling's single storey projection has been extended to the rear by a further 2m ('bathroom extension'), and the kitchen has been extended to the side ('kitchen extension') filling in the gap to the neighbouring dwelling.
6. The bathroom extension has increased the length of the already long, blank wall facing no. 47's garden. That part of no. 47 closest to it is the rear wall of a predominantly two storey projection, which does not contain any windows. No. 47 also has a small greenhouse just beyond the bathroom extension. Notwithstanding the bathroom extension's limited height, given the cumulative depth of development at the appeal property, it has resulted in a very enclosed and rather oppressive outlook from parts of no. 47's outdoor space.
7. No. 51 has patio doors close to no. 49 in part of its two storey rear elevation. The outlook from those doors is contained to the right by that property's own two storey projection. However, as a result of the kitchen extension, which abuts the boundary, the outlook from there is now also significantly constrained to the left. Although the kitchen extension is single storey, it has led to a very narrow outlook from those doors and from the adjacent outdoor area. Furthermore, the outlook from the ground floor side window in its two storey projection is towards the blank side wall of the kitchen extension, which is significantly taller than the boundary fence.
8. I have limited evidence regarding the scheme's impact on the availability of light in no. 51's rooms served by its patio doors and side window. However, on the basis of the information before me, given the depth and proximity of the kitchen extension, which lies roughly south of those openings, some limited loss of light is also likely to have occurred.
9. The Council's 'A Design Guide to House Extensions' Supplementary Planning Guidance 2003 ('SPG') states that, as rear extensions to terraced houses can have a significant and detrimental impact on neighbouring properties, their acceptable length and height will be derived from the site circumstances. With regard to the particular circumstances and context here, the rear extensions have had a significant adverse overbearing effect on the living conditions at nos. 47 and 51. That harmful impact is contrary to policies DM4 and DM9 of the Reading Borough Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 ('SDPD'), and to the general approach in the SPG.
10. Although the scheme has reduced the amount of rear outdoor amenity space, the host property nonetheless retains a reasonably proportioned area, which is not wholly dissimilar to others nearby, and which provides sufficient space for a family to sit outside, or perform typical domestic tasks. There is also public open space nearby. Consequently, although this scheme may not comply with the calculations at paragraph 5.6.10 of SDPD policy DM10, I am satisfied that it satisfies the broad intention of that policy, and that it has not resulted in substandard living conditions for the occupants of the host property.

*Character and appearance*

11. The two front dormer windows would be modestly proportioned and set in significantly from the roof's edges. However, I observed that the front facing roof slopes of the terraces in Cumberland Road are largely unaltered, which gives the roofscape a sense of cohesion and unity in the streetscene. This

proposal would significantly disrupt that rhythm. Whilst the appellant has referred me to existing dormers at nos. 1 -5 Winver Place, they are some distance away on a modern detached building. They do not therefore alter my conclusions regarding the prevailing character of the road.

12. The rear extensions to no. 49, which include areas of rough render and exposed breeze blocks, are unfinished. In my view, given the variety of materials on the rear elevation of this terrace, an appropriately rendered finish would not be out of character with the area. Nevertheless, this development, when considered cumulatively with previous extensions, results in a scale and depth of extensions that dominates the host building. Although the rear elevation is not visible in the streetscene, it can be seen from surrounding properties. Whilst there are many nearby rear extensions, I did not observe any whose combination of depth and width is the same as that here.
13. For the above reasons the proposed dormers would harm the streetscene, and the scheme's rear extensions cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. Those impacts are contrary to Reading Borough Core Strategy 2008 policy CS7 and SDPD policy DM9's requirements that proposals make a positive contribution to an area's character, respect the character of the house, and reinforce local distinctiveness. The scheme also conflicts with the broadly similar requirements in the National Planning Policy Framework ('Framework'). Whilst the appellant states that the dormers could be omitted, given my conclusions on this and the other main issue, that would not change the outcome of the appeal.

#### *Other matters*

14. The site is sustainably located, and the scheme makes an efficient use of the land to provide additional accommodation for the dwelling's occupants. Those benefits address various objectives in the Framework. However, whilst the appellant states that elements of the scheme could be built under the prior approval procedure, and also refers to an appeal decision elsewhere, I have dealt with the scheme before me in its entirety and on its merits, and with regard to the Framework's requirement to consider the amenity of all existing and future occupants.

### **Conclusions**

15. The limited benefits of the development do not outweigh the significant harm the rear extensions cause to the character and appearance of the host property and the area, and to the living conditions of the neighbouring occupiers. The proposed front dormers would also harm the rhythm and cohesion of the streetscene. For those reasons, the scheme does not benefit from the Framework's presumption in favour of sustainable development, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

*Chris Couper*

INSPECTOR