
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 November 2016

by Veronica Bond LLB (Hons), Solicitor (non-practising)

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

Decision date: 25th November 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/D/16/3158586

4 Mill Green, Reading, Berkshire RG4 8EX

- 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 E Jennings against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 160622, dated 29 March 2016, was refused by notice dated 17 June 2016.
 - The development proposed is loft conversion with hip to gable roof, flat roof rear dormer, second storey rear extension, single storey rear and front extensions.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. Although the application sought planning permission for the proposal in its entirety as outlined above, the appellant contends that planning permission is not required for certain aspects. Whether or not planning permission is required is not a matter for me to determine in the context of an appeal made under S78 of the above Act. It is open for the appellant to apply for a determination under sections 191/192 of the above Act to determine this matter. My determination of this appeal under section 78 of the above Act does not affect the issuing of a determination under s191/192 of the same Act.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and on the living conditions of neighbouring occupants, with particular regard to privacy.

Reasons

4. The host property is a semi-detached dwelling which has a hipped roof in common with the adjoining property. It fronts Mill Green and its rear elevation is clearly visible from Mill Road. There is a mixture of property styles in the surrounding area but extensions in the immediate area generally respect the dominance of the host property and appear unobtrusive in the street scene.
5. The proposed rear dormer window would be of substantial size relative to the host property. The first floor rear extension is of a flat roofed design and would feature a chamfered corner, which would be out of character with the lines of the existing house and its hipped roof. At roof level, the hip to gable extension

would add further bulk and would unbalance the pair of semi-detached properties. The effect would be of an awkward design and significant mass which would dominate the host dwelling and would be visually jarring, drawing the eye, particularly in views from Mill Road.

6. I acknowledge that the appellant appreciates that the design is convoluted and has sought to provide the maximum area possible working within the constraints of the site. However, this does not overcome the harm identified.
7. I conclude on the first main issue that the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. It would conflict with Policy CS7 of the Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (adopted January 2008 – with alteration adopted 27 January 2015) and with and Policy DM9 of the Reading Borough Local Development Framework Sites and Detailed Policies Document (adopted October 2012 – with alteration adopted 27 January 2015) (SDPD). These include in their aims seeking development of a high design quality which responds positively to local context; and extensions which respect the character of the house and of neighbouring properties, and the street as a whole. It would be contrary also to the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance – A Design Guide to House Extensions (May 2003), which includes similar aims.
8. As to the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of neighbouring occupants as regards privacy, I acknowledge the Council's concerns that the flat roof section of the first floor extension would potentially lead to a harmful degree of overlooking. I share this view, given the close proximity of neighbouring properties. However, I accept the appellant's approach that this could be adequately overcome by a condition preventing the use of the flat roof as a balcony.
9. I conclude on the second main issue then that, provided it were appropriately conditioned, the proposal would not result in harm to the living conditions of neighbouring occupants, with particular regard to privacy. I find no conflict in this way with Policy DM4 of the SDPD which seeks to safeguard amenity including as regards overlooking.

Conclusion

10. Although I have found that any harm related to the living conditions of neighbouring occupants could be overcome by condition, this does not compensate for the development plan conflict and harm found regarding the impact on the character and appearance of the area.
11. For the above reasons, and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should fail.

Veronica Bond
INSPECTOR