
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 March 2017

by Jonathan Manning BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 4 April 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/D/17/3169554

8 Fairfax Close, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 6DA

- 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 J Mayall against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 161307, dated 12 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 12 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is second storey front extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. Having regard to the evidence before me, including that of interested parties, I consider that the main issues of the appeal are: the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the area; and the effect of the scheme on the living conditions of the occupants of neighbouring properties.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is located on Fairfax Close and currently accommodates a two-storey detached dwelling. The surrounding area is residential, with a mixture of semi-detached and detached dwellings. The proposal seeks to construct a first floor extension over the existing garage to extend one of the property's bedrooms.
 4. The proposed extension would be a significant new addition to the host dwelling. At its highest point, the extension would extend roughly half way up the existing roofscape and would only be set marginally back from the front elevation of the garage, which in itself projects forward of the main elevation of the dwelling. It would also be just under half the width of the dwelling itself. I consider that the extension would result in a bulky addition that due to its scale, would appear as an overly dominant feature, which would be unsympathetic to the host dwelling and not sufficiently subservient. For these reasons, I consider that the scheme would cause harm to both the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the area.
 5. The Council has suggested that the proposed extension would be an uncharacteristic feature in the street scene. However, I do not share this view.
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Whilst I observed that there is some uniformity to the street scene, the properties at No 1, No 5 and No 14 Fairfax Close all have similar features to that proposed in this case. However, it was clear on my site visit that such other examples are all smaller in scale and appear, in my view, subservient to their host dwellings, which is not the case here.

6. In conclusion on this matter, the scheme by virtue of its scale and bulk would cause harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the area. As a result, the scheme runs contrary to Policy CS7 'Design and the Public Realm' of the Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2008) and Policy DM9 'House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation' of the Reading Borough Local Development Framework Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012) (the SDPD). Further, the proposal conflicts with the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance 'A Design Guide to House Extensions' (2003), as well as Section 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Living conditions

7. Interested parties have raised several concerns with regard to the loss of sunlight and daylight and also suggest that the scheme would appear overbearing. As part of my site visit, I observed the proposal from the neighbouring property No 10.
8. Dealing firstly with daylight, I do not have any suitable drawings before me to show that the scheme would comply with the commonly used 45 degree rule with the ground floor window of No 10, which serves a lounge. Bearing in mind the height and projection of the proposed extension, without such evidence, I am unable to determine whether the scheme would or would not result in any material loss of daylight. A precautionary approach must therefore be adopted.
9. In terms of loss of direct sunlight to No 10, due to the orientation between the two properties any loss of sunlight would be limited to the evening. The garage of No 8 already projects forward from the front elevation of No 10 and at such times when the evening sun would be relatively low in the sky, the existing building has the potential in itself to result in some loss of sunlight to the front ground floor window of No 10. Given this, any further loss of sunlight as a result of the scheme would, in my view, be very minor and would only be for a relatively short period of time. Consequently, I consider that the proposal would not result in any unacceptable harm to the living conditions of the occupants of No 10, by virtue of the loss of direct sunlight.
10. Turning to concerns in relation to overbearingness, I observed that when viewed from the window serving the lounge of No 10 that views of the proposed extension could only be gained at an oblique angle. The same would also apply to the first floor window directly above the ground floor lounge window. I also observed that the side window of No 10 currently looks directly at the side elevation of No 8 and therefore has a very limited existing outlook. Further, from the side window, the proposal would also only be seen at an oblique angle. Whilst the extension would be clearly evident from the front door of No 10, this is not a primary living space and the occupants would not spend any significant period of time observing the proposed extension from this location, which would be limited to when the occupants were entering or exiting the property. Given these matters, I am not of the view that the

scheme would cause any harm to the living conditions of the occupants of No 10, as a result of overbearingness.

11. The occupants of No 6 have raised concerns that the scheme would lead to the loss of sunlight and daylight. However, due to the distance between the proposed extension and the front elevation of No 6, I am not of the view that the scheme would lead to any loss of sunlight or daylight to the ground floor or first floor windows of No 6.
12. In conclusion on this main issue, I do not have sufficient evidence before me to be able to conclude that the scheme would not result in any unacceptable loss of daylight to the front ground floor window of No 10. As a result, I must conclude that the scheme has the potential to cause harm to the living conditions of the occupants of No 10 in this regard. The proposal does not therefore comply with Policy DM4 'Safeguarding Amenity' of the SDPD.

Other matters

13. I acknowledge that the proposed development would provide improved living accommodation to the appellant. However, this matter is not sufficient to outweigh the identified harm.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal conflicts with the development plan when taken as a whole. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Jonathan Manning

INSPECTOR