
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 August 2017

by S M Holden BSc MSc CEng MICE TPP FCIHT MRTPI

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

Decision date: 17th August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/W/17/3174275

67 Peppard Road, Caversham, Reading RG4 8NH

- 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 Duncan Neal against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 161799, dated 26 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 17 February 2017.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing 3 flat roof garages and replacement with 4 garages with pitched hipped roof to match adjoining residential property.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effects of the proposed development on the:
 - a) character and appearance of the area;
 - b) living conditions of the occupants of the ground floor flat of No 67 in relation to outlook.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. No 67 is a large detached dwelling which has been sub-divided into flats. It is set well back from the road and on higher ground. Much of the area in front of the building is used for the parking of vehicles. A retaining wall separates the area directly abutting the building from a spacious area of hard surfacing that currently serves a flat-roof block of three garages. The proposal seeks to demolish this existing structure and replace it with a block of four garages with a pitched roof.
4. The existing garages have a utilitarian appearance but their limited height and extent means that they are clearly subservient to the host property. Their low profile ensures that they are unobtrusive. As the highway verge contains mature trees they are also largely obscured from public view. The replacement garage block would be wider than the existing structure and would bring development closer to the road. It would also be significantly taller. The combination of the additional width, height and bulk of the building would make it a much more prominent feature of the area.

5. Other outbuildings in the area appear to be smaller scale structures which are not so far forward of the predominant building line or so close to the highway. By contrast the proposal would dominate the front garden and would be more visible from the street. Its additional height would significantly block views of the existing building from Peppard Road, including its first floor windows. The bulk and height of the roof would also draw attention to the location of the building, so far in front of the host property in an area where most of the built form is well set back and hidden from view.
6. The existing garages may not be aesthetically pleasing, but that is not a justification for replacing them with a building that would be significantly larger, bulkier and more prominent. In addition it would be out of keeping with other ancillary buildings in the locality. Neither would the use of a more traditional style of door, nor materials which matched those of the host property, offset the harm that would arise from the increased size of the building.
7. I conclude that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area, contrary to Policy CS7 of the Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy. This policy, amongst other things, requires development to be of high quality design that responds positively to its local context.

Living conditions

8. The ground floor of No 67 has two windows in the front elevation that appear to serve habitable rooms. These both look directly towards the existing garages, over its flat roof and
9. towards the road and the tree screen that encloses the front garden.
10. The proposal would significantly increase the height of the building introducing a substantial and bulky roof. Although this would have a hipped end it would be only about 8-9m from these windows. In my view the enlarged building would appear visually dominant and would materially reduce the outlook from these windows. This would be especially noticeable from the bay window on the south-east elevation of No 67 as its outlook is already restricted by the large tree screen along the southern boundary of the appeal site. It would therefore make this room feel more enclosed.
11. I conclude that the proposal would be harmful to the living conditions of occupants of the ground floor flat at No 67, arising from loss of outlook and an increased sense of enclosure. It would therefore fail to comply with Policy DM4 of the Reading Borough Local Development Framework Sites and Detailed Policies Document which, amongst other things, seeks to protect the living environment of existing residents in relation to visual dominance.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other relevant matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Sheila Holden
INSPECTOR