
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 August 2019

by Penelope Metcalfe BA(Hons) MSc DipUP DipDBE MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14th August 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/D/19/3231186

35A St Peters Avenue, Caversham, Reading , Berkshire, RG4 7DH

- 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 and Mrs Rodney Pinchen against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 181674, dated 19 September 2018, was refused by notice dated 29 March 2019.
 - The development proposed is first floor extension.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

1. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, with particular regard to the impact on a protected tree.

Reasons

2. 35A St Peters Avenue is a detached two storey house in an established residential area. It is set back from the road in a relatively long, narrow plot. It has a long narrow footprint perpendicular to the road and a roof form with a number of steep gables to the side and front. There is a large oak tree close to the northwest corner of the house which is subject to a Tree Preservation Order which has recently been confirmed. It is one of a number of individually identified protected trees grouped in and around 37 St Peters Avenue to the west.
3. The relevant policy in this case is CP38 of the Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2008 (the Core Strategy) which protects individual trees and groups of trees from damage.
4. The proposed extension would fill in the northwest corner of the house with a cantilevered first floor over an open porch. Although it would be relatively small in itself, it would be approximately 2 metres from the trunk of the tree at its nearest point. The appellants have submitted an Arboricultural Method Statement and Impact Assessment. The construction method has been designed to avoid the need for foundation or ground works. I consider that this method would be satisfactory insofar as it would not increase the pressure and stress on the roots beyond that which already exists due to the compaction of the surface from the drive and parking area.

5. The tree is mature and in good condition, but would appear to have potential for further growth in height and spread, provided there are no further constraints placed on its growth beyond that already arising from the close proximity of the existing house. It forms an important and attractive feature in the landscaping of the street as one of several mature trees planted not only around No. 37 but also at regular intervals in the verges along the length of the street. I consider that any development which would adversely affect the health and longevity of this tree would have an unacceptable adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area.
6. I accept that the extension could be constructed to avoid the root spread, with appropriate protective measures. However, I consider that because it would be so close to the tree it would both inhibit the latter's further natural growth and lead to pressure to reduce the canopy in order to avoid damage to the property. Such reduction works would not necessarily be required other than to accommodate the extension and would potentially compromise the future health and longevity of the tree.
7. I acknowledge the appellants' willingness to have tree branches in very close proximity to the living accommodation, and I note that one of the main branches is already close to the existing first floor front bedroom. However, there is no guarantee that future occupiers would be of the same mind or that there might not be pressure in future to cut back the tree. While such works would be subject to control by virtue of the Tree Preservation Order, it could prove difficult for the Council to resist such pressure. It is important that the Tree Preservation Order be maintained in order to protect the contribution which this tree makes to the attractive and verdant character of the street scene.
8. I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area because of its siting and potential adverse impact on the protected tree. It would be contrary to Core Strategy policy CS38.
9. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

PAG Metcalfe

INSPECTOR