



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 May 2019

by Rebecca McAndrew BA Hons, PG Dip Urban Design, MSc, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21st October 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/D/19/3226998

14 Franklin Street, Reading RG1 7YA

- 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 Harvinder Luthra of Kennet Investments Ltd against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 182234, dated 18 December 2018, was refused by notice dated 11 March 2019.
 - The development proposed is a proposed loft conversion with dormers to the rear and roof windows to the front elevation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. It is noted that the original scheme submitted included a single dormer in the rear roof plane of the property and that, during the course of the planning application, the scheme was amended to include two rear dormers. I have therefore used the description of development used both on the decision notice and the appeal form as it is more accurately describes the proposal before me than the original description of development.
3. Both the Council's Officer Report and Decision Notice refer to Drawing 106 Rev B. However, the Council has confirmed this to be an error and the application was actually determined on the basis of Drawing 106 Rev A. The appellant has also confirmed that Drawing 106 Rev A is the correct drawing. I have therefore considered the appeal on the basis of Drawing 106 Rev A.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposals on the character and appearance of the dwelling and the area, including the Russell Street / Castle Hill Conservation Area.

Reasons

5. The appeal relates to the proposed installation of rooflights and dormers to a property which sits within a row of terrace houses within the Russell Street / Castle Hill Conservation Area. The unaltered roof plane of this terrace is a key design feature which makes a significant contribution to the character and

- visual appearance of the properties, the streetscene and the Conservation Area.
6. The proposal to install two roof lights within the front roof plane of the dwelling would introduce new features which would unacceptably interrupt this original roof form and would be highly visible within the street scene. Consequently, the proposal would unacceptably harm the character and visual appearance of the dwelling itself, the area and the Conservation Area.
 7. It is recognised that conservation standard roof lights are proposed which would be modest in scale and would sit flush within the roof plane. However, given that they would break up this otherwise unaltered roofscape, this would not significantly mitigate the harm I have described.
 8. I note that other properties in the street include front gable features above bays, but this is an original design feature. I also acknowledge that there is variation in the elevation and boundary treatments of some dwellings, such as painted brickwork. Whilst the terrace does vary in some terms, the original form of the properties remains largely intact, and the unimpeded roof plane significantly contributes to the character and appearance of the properties, the area and the Conservation Area. I therefore attach limited weight to these considerations in support of allowing the appeal.
 9. Turning to the proposed rear dormers, the rear roof plane of the wider terrace also remains largely unaltered, it includes some rooflights but no dormers. I note that the proposed dormers would be relatively small in scale and the proposed materials would complement the existing property. However, in the context of the unbroken form of the rear roof slope, the mass and bulk of the proposed dormers would represent a significant visual intrusion to both the dwelling and the terrace. Consequently, the dormers would be an incongruous feature which would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the dwelling and the area, including the Conservation Area.
 10. I acknowledge that the proposed rear dormers would not be visible within the public realm. However, given that the area is characterised by terraced houses with back to back gardens, they would be visible from the rear gardens of a number of nearby residential properties. The proposal would be overly prominent in the context of the host dwelling and adjacent properties and would therefore harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling, the area and the Conservation Area.
 11. I note that Paragraph 201 of the NPPF states that '*not all elements of a Conservation Area ... will necessarily contribute to its significance*' and that the Conservation Area Appraisal does not specifically mention the uninterrupted roofscapes as contributing to the significance of the Conservation Area. However, as described, the rows of terraced properties are integral to the character of the area and therefore, in my view, the unaltered roofscape is intrinsic to this character. Therefore, I attach limited weight to this consideration in support of dismissing the appeal.
 12. For the reasons above, I conclude the development would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. This harm would be 'less than substantial' in the context of the context of paragraphs 133-134 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019). However,

the limited benefits associated with inserting roof lights and dormers into the roof of the property do not outweigh the harm in this case.

13. I conclude the scheme would be contrary to Policies CS7 and CS33 of the Reading Borough Council Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2008, as altered 2015), Policy DM9 of the Reading Borough Council Local Development Framework Sites and Detailed Policies (2012, as altered 2015), and the provisions of the NPPF.

Other Matters

14. I have considered other examples of rooflights and dormers within the area cited by the appellant's agent. Based on the information before me and my site visit, it appears that those properties differ from the appeal property and the wider terrace in both design and form. That aside, each proposal must be considered on its own merit. Therefore, in considering the appeal I attach limited weight to this matter.

Conclusion

15. I conclude that the proposal would conflict with the development plan, the NPPF and Conservation Area legislation and there are no material considerations that would indicate that the appeal should be allowed. Therefore, for the reasons given, the appeal is dismissed.

Rebecca McAndrew

INSPECTOR