
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 March 2020

by Adrian Hunter BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7th October 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/W/19/3243024

69 Northumberland Avenue, Reading RG2 7PS

- 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 Dr Lakshmi Kanthan against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 191267, dated 2 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 4 October 2019.
 - The development proposed is first floor rear / side extension to facilitate 1no additional self-contained flat. Resubmission of 190719.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. For clarity and precision, I have amended the description of development from the application form to match that of the decision notice. I have determined the appeal on this basis.
3. Since the determination of the appeal proposal, I note that the new Local Plan was formally adopted on 4 November 2019. As a result, policies in the Core Strategy (2008, updated 2015) and the Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012, updated 2015) do not now form part of the development plan. I have therefore determined the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - The effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the area;
 - The effect of the proposed development upon the living conditions of nearby residents, with particular regard to overbearing and loss of outlook to 67 Northumberland Avenue;
 - The effect of the proposal upon highway safety, in particular respect to vehicular parking; and
 - Whether the proposal makes adequate provision for local infrastructure, in particular the provision of affordable housing.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site occupies a prominent corner position within the street scene. As a result of previous extensions, a significant amount of the plot is now taken up by built development, however the previous design approach has ensured that these additions remain subservient to the original building and that an element of visual separation is maintained between it and surrounding properties.
6. The proposed development would introduce a further two storey element that would be significantly closer to adjoining properties than the existing arrangements. This would substantially reduce the visual separation between the appeal site and surrounding buildings, in particular those along Newcastle Road. The size and mass of the proposed first floor extension would increase the overall scale and amount of built development on the site to such a degree that the extensions would no longer be subservient to the main dwelling. When viewed from the public realm, the development would therefore appear as a cramped form of development, indicative of overdevelopment on the site. As a result, the proposal would be out of keeping and harmful to the character and appearance of the area.
7. For the above reasons, I therefore conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area and, in this respect, is contrary to Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019) and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). These policies, amongst other things, require that development is of a high design quality and maintains the character and appearance of the area through layout and urban grain; density and mix; and scale height and massing.

Living conditions

8. The proposal would introduce a two-storey addition to the south of 67 Northumberland Avenue, which would increase the overall height, bulk and mass of the existing appeal property in close proximity to the boundary with No 67.
9. Due to the proximity, design and height of the proposed addition, the proposal would represent a visually intrusive and overbearing form of development, that would create a significant feeling of enclosure to the neighbouring property. This would be detrimental to the living conditions of the occupiers of 67 Northumberland Avenue.
10. For the above reasons, I therefore conclude that the proposed development would harm the living conditions of surrounding residents and, in this respect, is contrary to Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019) and the Framework. These policies, amongst other things, state that development should not be detrimental to the living environment of existing residential properties in terms of visual dominance and overbearing.

Highway safety

11. Policy TR5 requires development to provide a level of car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of the site. Using the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, the development would be

required to provide an additional on-site parking space to accommodate the new unit.

12. Whilst the parking standards would require the provision of an additional parking space, I note Paragraphs 105 and 106 of the Framework, which require, amongst other things maximum parking standards to be only set where there is clear and compelling justification that they are necessary for managing the local road network. I note the supporting parking survey, which concludes that there is available on-street capacity within surrounding streets to accommodate the demand likely to be generated by the proposal. The site lies within a sustainable location with access to public transport, shops and services.
13. I note that comments of the Local Highway Authority on the application and those of local residents in relation to the reliability and accuracy of the parking survey. There is however no substantive evidence before me to suggest that the failure to provide a further additional on-site parking space would result in any significant adverse impact upon highway safety.
14. For the above reasons, I therefore conclude that the proposed development would not have an adverse effect upon highway safety and, in this respect, is in accordance with Policies TR3 and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019) and the Framework. These policies, amongst other things, seek to ensure that development provides car parking that is appropriate to its location and its accessibility to sustainable transport facilities.

Affordable housing

15. Policy DM6 and Policy H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan relates to the provision of a contribution to affordable housing. The delivery of any contribution requires the completion of a S106 Agreement. A completed Unilateral Undertaking has been provided to this effect and it accords with the provisions of Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 and the tests for planning obligations set out in the Framework. Therefore, with such a mechanism in place I am satisfied that the scheme would make adequate provision to deliver the necessary contribution to local infrastructure.
16. For these reasons, I therefore conclude that the proposed development would ensure the adequate delivery of local infrastructure and, in this respect is in accordance with Policies DM6 and H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan and the Framework.

Conclusion

17. I have found that the proposal would accord with the development plan in relation to the provision of local infrastructure and highway matters. I have however found that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area and the living conditions of neighbouring residents.
18. Taking all matters into account, for the reasons given above, the appeal should be dismissed.

Adrian Hunter

INSPECTOR