



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 October 2022

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31st October 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/D/21/3278656

11 Whiteknights Road, Reading RG6 7BY

- 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 Song against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 210328, dated 27 February 2021, was refused by notice dated 20 April 2021.
 - The development proposed is a single storey rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a single storey rear extension at 11 Whiteknights Road, Reading RG6 7BY in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 210328, dated 27 February 2021, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: P/2037/1 and P/2037/2.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.
 - 4) The roof area of the extension hereby permitted shall not be used as a balcony, roof garden or similar amenity area without the grant of further specific permission from the local planning authority.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host property.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The host comprises a detached two storey dwelling, with more accommodation in flat-roofed single storey sections to its sides, which I understand have been formed from extensions or conversions. It sits back from the road amongst a line of other detached dwellings which are mainly finished in light buff or dark red brickwork.

4. The proposed single storey extension would project approximately 6 metres from the host's original rear face, and would span the width of the plot. However, its bulk would be significantly tempered by its low single storey, flat-roofed form, which would respect the style and height of the existing side sections, to which it would be attached. It would also be much lower than, and subordinate to, the host's principal two storey section.
5. Additionally, its matching dark red brickwork would help to assimilate it with the host, and in this location behind frontage properties, it would not be visible in the streetscene.
6. Given the presence of a much deeper single storey rear annexe adjacent to the boundary at 9 Whiteknights Road ('No 9'), the scheme would not be prominent viewed from that property. As the rear face of 13 Whiteknights Road ('No 13') is stepped back compared to the host, and given the presence of a boundary fence, the scheme at this modest height, would not be unduly dominant viewed from that property.
7. Amongst other things, the Council's Design Guide to House Extensions Supplementary Planning Document 2021 states that proposals that appear bulky and sizeable in relation to the existing dwelling will not be considered favourably, and that extensions greater than four metres deep will not normally be supported unless justified by the specific circumstances.
8. Whilst this scheme would be deeper than that, for the reasons above, and having regard to cumulative impacts, it would not appear disproportionate, unduly bulky or incongruous, and it would not conflict with the broad thrust of that advice. It would not harm the character and appearance of the host property, and having regard to the varied form and staggered siting of nearby dwellings, including the presence of some large flat-roofed extensions, it would not appear out of place in the local area.
9. The scheme would not therefore conflict with Policies CC7 and H9 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 which require high quality design, which respects the character and appearance of the house in terms of scale, location, materials and design, and which responds positively to the local context.

Other matters

10. With no windows to its sides, the principal outlook from the proposed extension would be down the host's own garden, and it would not result in significant overlooking of neighbouring properties.
11. Having regard to the existing development at No 9 and No 13, and to the local topography, the scheme, with its limited single storey height, would not dominate the adjacent properties. For similar reasons, it would not cause them a harmful loss of light, including to their extensions and patios. In particular, I understand that a window in No 9's annexe, which faces the side fence, serves a bathroom, and any loss of light to that room as a result of this scheme would thus be limited and would not have a significant impact on the occupant's living conditions.
12. Having regard to the scheme's limited height, I am not persuaded that it would significantly impact the functionality of the solar panels on the annexe's roof.

13. I have dealt with the proposal before me on its planning merits, and have not considered speculation regarding future proposals. Party wall matters are addressed by other legislation. I have no substantive evidence that the proposal would result in damage to adjacent property, and in any event such matters would normally be addressed under separate legal rights.

Conditions and Conclusion

14. Turning to the matter of conditions, I have considered those suggested by the Council against the tests in the National Planning Policy Framework ('Framework'). I have imposed the standard time limit condition and, in the interests of certainty, a condition requiring that the development be carried out in accordance with the approved plans. In the interests of good design, a matching materials condition is also necessary.
15. Given the expanse of elevated flat roof that would be created as a result of this scheme, I share the Council's concern that its use as an amenity area could result in overlooking of adjoining premises to the significant detriment of those occupiers' living conditions. In the interests of clarity and ensuring appropriate living conditions, a condition preventing such a use, based on the example at Appendix A of Circular 11/95, is therefore necessary.
16. The Council has suggested a condition removing permitted development rights for Class A development. However, Framework paragraph 54 states that planning conditions should not be used to restrict such rights unless there is clear justification to do so. No detailed justification has been provided here and the dwelling does not sit on a particularly constrained plot. Consequently, I consider that such a condition would not pass the tests of reasonableness or necessity, and I have not imposed it.
17. Finally, an interested party alleges that the host contains at least one self-contained flat. However, I have dealt with the scheme before me as a house extension; and as the creation of a separate unit of accommodation would require planning permission, the Council's suggested condition requiring that it be used only for purposes ancillary to the main dwelling is unnecessary.
18. Summing up, the scheme would not harm the character and appearance of the host property, or the area. Consequently, having regard to all other matters raised, including representations by interested parties, the appeal is allowed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR