



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 October 2022

by M. P. Howell BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 November 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/W/22/3298606

Flat 1, 141, Caversham Road, Reading RG1 8AU

- 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 Lama against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 210530, dated 7 April 2021, was refused by notice dated 10 May 2022.
 - The development proposed is Installation of door at first floor and external staircase to rear.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the installation of a new door at the back of a first floor flat and an installation of a rear external staircase at Flat 1, 141, Caversham Road Reading RG1 8AU in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 210530, dated 7 April 2021, subject to the following condition:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Existing and Proposed Floor Plans, Proposed Site Plan, Proposed layout, Elevations and Sections Plan.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development in the banner heading above is taken directly from the Council's Decision Notice. This more accurately reflects the development proposed than that set out in the planning application form.
3. At the time of my site visit, an external staircase and a doorway had been installed on site. Notwithstanding what has been erected on site, my determination of the appeal has been based on the drawings submitted, and I will hereafter refer to the development as the proposed development. For the avoidance of doubt, I have assessed the scheme based on the drawings considered by the Council, which include the Existing and Proposed Floor Plans, Proposed Site Plan, Proposed layout, Elevations and Sections Plan.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the proposed development would provide adequate accommodation for future occupants, with regards to a safe, secure and convenient access.

Reasons

Living conditions for future occupiers

5. Caversham Road is a busy urban location close to the city centre of Reading. The road is a well-used and characterised by a mix of residential and commercial uses. In the immediate context of the appeal site, the street scene is largely characterised by two storey buildings fronting the road with retail and commercial uses at ground floor and residential above.
6. 141 Caversham Road is a mid-terraced property, with a restaurant at ground floor and residential above. The majority of the rear curtilage is covered by built development, which includes a flat roof extension to the ground floor and two storey projection above. The remaining space is taken up by a two-storey outbuilding with an under-croft area, accessible from Swansea Road. The under-croft area is used for storage to the back of the restaurant. A metal gate with an open design is positioned across the vehicle opening to the under-croft area.
7. The proposed development is for an external staircase from the rear yard to the rear flat roof, and the insertion of a door at first floor providing direct access to the flat. The future occupants would access the flat via the external staircase and flat roof area from Swansea Road, via the under-croft area.
8. I appreciate that future occupiers of the first floor flat would share an access with the ground floor commercial use onto Swansea Road. Although this situation is not ideal, it is not unusual for flats to be accessed via external stairs, particularly in densely populated urban locations such as this. Furthermore, the under-croft area is accessed from a pedestrian footpath via a secure and lockable pedestrian gate. The under-croft area is small and flat, meaning future occupiers of the flat would only be required to travel a short distance across a level surface to access the external steps. The steps and flat roof area are open but include safety features, such as non-slip steps and a handrail. Having regard to the secure gate access, the short distance needed to travel across the shared area, coupled with the safety design features, the access would be safe, secure and convenient for future occupiers.
9. Accordingly, the proposed development would provide adequate living conditions for the future occupiers, with regards to a safe, secure and convenient access. The proposed development would comply with Policies CC8 and H5 of the Reading Local Plan 2019 (LP), which seek to ensure that development does not have a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties.

Other Matters

10. I have had regard to the dispute over the pre application advice and general miscommunication. However, how the pre application submission and planning application were handled is outside my remit. This would not affect my conclusions on the main issues.

Conditions

11. I have considered the Council's suggested conditions in accordance with the Planning Practice Guidance. As the door and external staircase has already been implemented, it is not necessary to require a condition to implement the consent

within the standard time period. However, it is necessary in the interests of precision and clarity, to define the approved plans for the scheme.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above and taking into account the development plan as a whole and all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

M. P. Howell

INSPECTOR