



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 November 2022

by Jane Smith MA MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 November 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/W/22/3298149

36 Wantage Road, Reading, Berkshire RG30 2SF

- 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 Paul Chance against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 211986, dated 3 December 2021, was refused by notice dated 11 February 2022.
 - The development proposed is conversion of roof space to first floor flat No 36A with dormer structures to form bedroom and bathroom.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal site is the upper flat in a subdivided semi-detached property. Its address was given as 36 Wantage Road on the application form and that is the address I have used in the banner heading above. However, both parties confirm that the flat is number 36A, as stated on the Council's decision notice.
3. Additional drawing WR/PL/04 rev A was provided with the appeal, amending the proposed front elevation to retain the existing chimney. The Council and an interested party had raised concerns about removal of the chimney stack. I do not consider that this amendment would be prejudicial to any party and have therefore taken account of the additional drawing when considering the appeal.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the existing building and surrounding street scene.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is in a street of terraced and semi-detached dwellings. The front elevations of many of the existing dwellings incorporate ornate brickwork and prominent chimneys, giving the street scene an attractive and interesting character. Several of the existing dwellings have front dormer windows, which are part of their original design. These are relatively small in proportion to the roof slope and are vertically-proportioned with pitched roofs.
6. The proposed front dormer would occupy much of the roof slope and would encapsulate the retained chimney. It would have a horizontally-proportioned, flat roofed design, which has little in common with the existing dormers on nearby dwellings. Although it would be set in from the outer edges of the roof,

it would still dominate the roof slope, giving the building a top-heavy appearance.

7. While there is some variety in dwelling design along Wantage Road, large flat roofed dormers are not a typical feature of the street scene. The existing dormer on the front of 38 Wantage Road is an anomaly. Both parties acknowledge that it was erected without planning permission. While recognising that it has now become an established feature of the street scene, this does not amount to justification for further harmful additions.
8. Although the proposed dormer would give this pair of semi-detached properties a more symmetrical appearance, the combined bulk of the two adjacent dormers would be even more dominant when the front elevation is considered as a whole. As such, the cumulative adverse effect on the character and appearance of the street scene would outweigh any limited benefit arising from a more symmetrical front elevation.
9. The proposed rear dormer would be similarly dominant on the roof slope. This part of the site is much less publicly prominent, since the narrow gaps between the dwellings obstruct views to the rear. The rear dormer would therefore, of itself, have a limited effect on the character and appearance of the street scene. However, it would result in the removal of the rear chimney stack and would also add to the cumulative bulk of the proposed extensions. As such, the proposed rear dormer also contributes to the adverse effect on the character and appearance of the building and street scene.
10. While I have noted the intended use of matching materials, alignment with existing windows and retention of the front chimney, these more positive aspects of the design would not overcome the harm arising from the scale and proportions of the proposed extensions.
11. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the existing building and surrounding street scene. As such, it is contrary to Policies CC7 and H9 of the Reading Borough Local Plan adopted November 2019. These policies, amongst other things, require that development responds positively to its local context and that house extensions respect the character and appearance of the house and the appearance of the street as a whole.
12. The proposed development would also conflict with the guidance in the Reading Borough Council Design Guide to House Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), adopted March 2021. This advises against large box dormers which are not in proportion with the scale of the rest of the house. Although the SPD identifies dwelling types for which smaller flat roofed dormers may be appropriate, the appeal site does not fall within any of the identified categories.

Other Matters

13. While the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 states that planning decisions should not prevent or discourage appropriate innovation or change, that is not at the expense of ensuring all development is sympathetic to the surrounding built environment.
14. Although there would be modest benefits in terms of increased accommodation, this would not outweigh the harm I have identified to the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above, having had regard to the development plan as a whole, along with all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Jane Smith

INSPECTOR