



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 January 2024

by N Praine BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 January 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/D/23/3328423

20 Belle Vue Road, Reading RG1 7TX

- 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 Nichola Boraman against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 230454, dated 5 April 2023, was refused by notice dated 1 June 2023.
 - The development proposed is described as the erection of two dormer windows to the rear roof slope.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of two dormer windows to the rear roof slope at 20 Belle Vue Road, Reading RG1 7TX in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 230454, dated 5 April 2023, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall be begun within three years of the date of this permission.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and retained as such: PP-06 – Proposed Ground Floor Plan; PP-07 – Proposed First Floor Plan; PP-08 – Proposed Loft Floor Plan; PP-09 – Proposed Roof Top Plan; PP-10 – Proposed Section and Elevations; and PP-11 – Existing & Proposed Site Plan.
 - 3) The external finishes including materials used in the development hereby permitted shall match those of the existing dwelling and shall be retained as such.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal lies within the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area ("the CA"). Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on decision makers with respect to any buildings or land within a Conservation Area, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is therefore whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area including the CA.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a two-storey, end terrace dwelling fronting Belle View Road. To the flank side there are deep garden areas which serve the properties fronting Baker Street. To the rear of the appeal site there is a parking area and gardens which separate the appeal site from the buildings facing Russell Street.
5. The significance of this part of the CA is defined, in part, by a pleasing mix of buildings which date back to at least the early 19th century. Belle Vue Road itself comprises smaller scaled 'cottage-style' polychrome terrace housing with a shared identity.
6. As one travels beyond the rear of the appeal site, the built form transitions to the grander Georgian tall terraces which face onto Russell Street some of which feature dormer style windows. This mix in building types and sizes adds a sense of curiosity and charm to this part of the historic environment and invites the observer to consider the growth and evolution of the CA.
7. The proposed development would introduce two modestly designed dormer windows to the rear of the appeal property with no discernible change to the front elevation facing Belle Vue Road.
8. The proposed development is to the rear of an otherwise undeveloped historic roofscape. However, each dormer window would be set into the roof slope with a proportionate width, height and depth when compared to the existing building. It would also line up vertically with the existing rear windows and would be appropriately separated from the ridge, eaves and side boundaries of the host building.
9. Therefore, when viewed in the context of the roofscape and wider terrace, the proposed development would add some variation while retaining the distinctiveness of the existing roofscape. This would coherently integrate into the host building and add further interest to the existing mix of buildings within the CA.
10. While land levels change across the CA, the proposed development would be reasonably well separated or screened from any other viewpoints and would be erected in materials to match the existing dwelling.
11. It is not clear why brick is suggested by the Council as a more suitable material. Particularly as existing dormer windows nearby, such as 48 and 50 Russell Street, comprise hanging tiles that match the existing roof. The proposed development's matching materials would be appropriate.
12. Grade II listed buildings, which include 61- 79 Baker Street, 36 Russell Street and 48 and 50 Russell Street, are sited in the vicinity of the appeal site. These buildings contribute positively to the locality. The Council do not object to the proposed development based on any harm to the setting of these buildings and given my findings above, I am inclined to agree.
13. As a result, the proposed development would respond positively to the local context therefore respecting the character of the appeal dwelling, neighbouring properties and the wider area. This would ensure there would be no harm to the significance of the CA.

14. The proposed development would therefore preserve the character or appearance of the area including the CA. As a result, it complies with the relevant provisions of Policies CC7, EN1 & EN3 of the Reading Borough Council Local Plan 2019. These, amongst other things, seek to preserve or enhance the significance of the character or appearance of the area including heritage assets.

Conditions

15. I have attached conditions on the time limit for development and plans in the interests of certainty. The incorporation of appropriate matching materials would be essential to the success of this proposed development and how it would integrate into the CA. Therefore, a condition ensuring materials match the existing is also necessary.

Conclusion

16. For the above reasons, having regard to the development plan as a whole and all other relevant considerations, the appeal is allowed.

N Praine

INSPECTOR