



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 August 2025

by **Martin Allen BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/W/24/3351980

70-78 Wokingham Road, Reading RG6 1JL

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Sarwan Chima against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 240015.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of existing building and construction of 6 no 3 bed flats and 6 no 2 bed flats over 3 storeys including parking, landscaping, bin and cycle stores.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Reading Borough Council against Mr Sarwan Chima. That application is the subject of a separate decision.

Main Issues

3. The main issues raised are:
 - The effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area,
 - The effect of the development on the living conditions of the occupiers of properties along College Road, with particular regard to overlooking,
 - Whether the future occupiers would experience satisfactory living conditions, with particular regard to daylight, outlook, and privacy,
 - Whether the development would deliver the appropriate level of Biodiversity Net Gain, and
 - Whether the development would make appropriate contributions in respect of affordable housing, employment and skills, and carbon off-setting.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal site lies along Wokingham Road and currently accommodates a building used as a hotel. This existing building has a predominantly two-storey form, however there is a three-storey element to one side. There is a sense of spaciousness to the surrounding area, which is re-enforced not only by the presence of a park on the opposite side of the road, but also the scale of nearby buildings and their spacing along the road. In this respect, the majority of nearby

buildings are two-storey in height and appearance. Some of these buildings appear to contain a third floor of accommodation, but in many cases, this is provided for within the roof space. I acknowledge that there is a three-storey building near to the site, however this is positioned at the junction of two roads and serves to “book end” the buildings along Wokingham Road.

5. The appeal scheme seeks to replace the existing hotel building with a new building that would accommodate twelve flats. The building would comprise two blocks, linked at the midpoint with a recessed link bridge. While I note that the link would be set back from the front elevation of the two blocks, it would be a not insignificant feature, itself comprising of two storeys with a space below. As a result, it would do little to ameliorate the bulk to the proposed building as a whole.
6. The new building would be a large, three-storey addition to the site which, given its overall width and height would appear as an overly assertive and dominant intrusion within the streetscene. It would appear substantially bulkier than existing nearby buildings and thereby be a discordant addition at this location, failing to integrate appropriately with its context.
7. That the existing hotel building includes a three-storey element does little to assuage my concerns in this respect, particularly as this existing element spans only a single, narrow gable width, whereas the proposal would present a full three-storey height across its entire frontage. Similarly, the three-storey building at the junction of Wokingham Road and College Road provides a bookend to the development along the road, with a two-storey building directly alongside, thus its positioning and context are different from the appeal site. I am conscious that the design of the overall building includes elements such as gabled fronts and bay windows, together with the use of red brick elevations, which reflect the design details that are found within the area, nonetheless this does not avoid the harmful effect of the development that I identify above.
8. The proximity of the proposed building to the road would leave little space to provide appropriate landscaping, particularly trees, within the development. In light of the location of the site opposite an area of green open space, which includes a significant number of trees, in order to appropriately integrate with the existing features surrounding the site, it should be expected that trees are included within any frontage planting. It has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that this could take place.
9. In respect of the concern over the layout of the parking areas, in particular the ability accommodate small delivery vehicles, the appellant has indicated that changes could be made to address this matter, and I consider that it would be possible to address this through the appropriate use of a planning condition. I therefore do not share the Council’s concern in this regard.
10. Nonetheless, for the reasons above, I find that the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. Thus, it conflicts with policies CC7, EN14 and EN15 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019) (the Local Plan). Together, and amongst other things, these require development to respond positively to local character, with particular regard to height and massing, as well as including appropriate new tree planting to maintain the character of an area and improve air quality.

11. I note the Council refer to policy EN7, which seeks to protect Local Green Spaces and Public Open Space. While I find that there is a lack of appropriate planting within the development scheme, this lack would not have any direct effect on the existing quality of the nearby Palmer Park and thus there would be no conflict with this policy.

Living conditions – neighbouring occupiers

12. To the rear of the appeal site lies 1 College Road (No. 1), which has a private amenity space to the rear and side. The appellant's statement indicates that there is a separation of just under 21 metres (m) between the rear elevation of the proposed building and the rear elevation of No. 1. However, the rear garden space lies between the elevations of the two buildings. Given the number of windows to the rear of the proposed building, which are all proposed to serve bedrooms, there would be a high likelihood of overlooking taking place of the existing garden area of No. 1, and this would take place at a distance of less than 21m. The effect of this would be exacerbated by the height of the proposal, in that there would be two full storeys of accommodation that would overlook the neighbouring site from an elevated position. Moreover, that there would be such a large number of windows facing No. 1, would also result in a perceived sense of being overlooked in addition to the actual overlooking that would occur.
13. Therefore, the development would result in unacceptable living conditions for the occupiers of 1 College Road, as a result of overlooking. The development is therefore contrary to policy CC8 of the Local Plan, insofar as it seeks to ensure that development does not result in detrimental impacts on the living environment of existing properties.

Living conditions – future occupiers

14. Flats 1 of Block B and 2 of Block A would both have their second bedrooms at ground floor level, with windows that are proposed to contain frosted glazing. This would result in a lack of any outlook from these windows and consequently the living environment experienced by residents using these bedrooms would be substandard. Moreover, the windows serving these bedrooms would be positioned beneath the undercroft where, given the orientation of the scheme, there would be little to no sunlight, and a significantly reduced amount of daylight. There is no assessment to demonstrate otherwise. This would compound the substandard nature of the proposed accommodation. I note that the appellant asserts that they are willing to accept a condition to ensure that these bedrooms are only used as a study. However, given that they are indicated to be bedrooms on the submitted plans, and that they meet the space standard to be bedrooms, I find it unlikely that such a condition would address this issue.
15. Flats 1 of Block A and 2 of Block B would both have all of their windows directly alongside the communal rear garden area and as such there would be the potential for overlooking at close quarters into these bedrooms, resulting in a lack of privacy. The appellant offers that a planning condition could secure the implementation of an area of defensible space outside of these windows to ensure that no such privacy impact would occur. While no such details are before me, I am satisfied that a condition would satisfactorily address this matter.
16. Nonetheless, future occupiers of Flats 1 of Block B and 2 of Block A, would not experience satisfactory living conditions, with particular regard to daylight and

outlook. Accordingly, the proposal conflicts with policy CC8 of the Local Plan, insofar as it seeks to ensure that development does not result in unacceptable living conditions within new residential properties.

Biodiversity Net Gain

17. The appellant states that the application was submitted prior to the national requirements for biodiversity net gain (BNG) but is willing to accept a condition to require that a BNG survey is undertaken. However, policy EN12 of the Local Plan requires that development does not result in a loss of biodiversity. In the absence of any assessment of the current biodiversity value of the site it is not possible to make an assessment of any enhancement that would be required. As such, it has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that the development would accord with policy EN12.

Contributions

18. The Council sets out that the development is required to provide the following contributions:
- 30% affordable housing
 - £25,000 towards carbon offsetting, and
 - £2,808.95 for employment skills and training.

Based on what I have seen, I agree that the contributions are necessary and would accord with the relevant tests.

19. Within the statement of case, the appellant argues that the development is not sufficiently viable to be able to support the contribution in respect of affordable housing but indicates that they are willing to enter into a legal agreement to secure the contributions towards carbon offsetting, as well as employment skills and training. Within the appellant's final comments, it is stated however that they are willing to negotiate to provide a contribution towards affordable housing. Nonetheless, I have no mechanism before me that would secure the relevant contributions.
20. In the absence of any appropriate agreement or undertaking, the development would not make appropriate contributions in respect of affordable housing, employment and skills, and carbon off-setting. Thus, it would conflict with policies H3, H5, CC3 and CC9 of the Local Plan. Together, and amongst other things, these policies seek to ensure that development makes appropriate contributions towards affordable housing, that residential development should achieve net zero carbon, that development incorporates measures to adapt to climate change and that development makes appropriate provision towards securing infrastructure.

Other Matters

21. I note that the development would result in the delivery of new housing at an appropriate location. Nonetheless, this is not sufficient to outweigh the harms I have identified above.

Conclusion

22. The development would conflict with the policies of the development plan as I identify above, and as a result it conflicts with the development plan as a whole. There are no matters sufficient to indicate that a decision should be taken other than in accordance with the development plan.
23. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

Martin Allen

INSPECTOR