



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 7 October 2025

by R E Jones BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 November 2025

Appeal A Ref: APP/E0345/W/25/3363140

97 London Road, Reading RG1 5BY

- 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 Royle Berkshire Developments against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PL/24/1148.
 - The development proposed is paving at the front of 97 London Road as agreed for 99 London Road (App:231844).
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Appeal B Ref: APP/E0345/Y/25/3363142

97 London Road, Reading RG1 5BY

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Royle Berkshire Developments against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PL/24/1111.
 - The works proposed are paving at the front of 97 London Road as agreed for 99 London Road (App:231844).
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Decision

1. Appeal A: The appeal is dismissed.
2. Appeal B: The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. The two appeals concern the same scheme under different, complementary legislation, namely the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) (the Act). I have dealt with both appeals together in my reasoning.
4. The description of development in the banner heading is taken from the application form. The appeal form and the Council's refusal notice, provide a different description that in addition to the proposed paving, includes the provision of a brick boundary wall and a new bin store. The Council made its decision based on that scheme and I have done the same. As the submitted drawings and appeal form refer to these proposals, I consider that no party has been prejudiced by my approach.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed building, 95 and 97 London Road.

Reasons

Special interest and significance

6. The appeal site comprises, in part, No 97 London Road (No 97), one of a pair of semi-detached dwellings that form 95 and 97 London Road (Nos 95 and 97), a Grade II listed building. This pair of mid-19th Century Italianate style dwellings have a stucco external finish, decorative cast iron railings, and a pair of symmetrical double height gables containing covered porches at either end of the front elevation.
7. The appeal building is set back from London Road, an historic thoroughfare characterised by large properties and mature street trees. The intervening space between the listed building and London Road comprises a lawn and narrow gravel path in front of No 97, while No 95 encompasses a hard surfaced driveway and parking ramp. Those hard surfaced elements have diminished the building's heritage value somewhat, particularly the parking ramp, which presents as a harsh engineered surface that also reveals a bland lower ground floor elevation.
8. Where properties along London Road—such as No. 97—have retained their front lawns, these, together with the imposing street trees, create an attractive landscaped setting. This softens the built frontage and reinforces the road's leafy, verdant quality.
9. From the evidence before me, the special interest and significance of Nos 95 and 97, is derived, in part, from its historic and architectural interests. Important contributors in these regards are its surviving historic fabric, its refined architectural form and detailing and its elegant appearance in the street.
10. Pertinent to the appeal, the building's special interest and significance also stem, in part, from its setting. The existing front lawn and adjacent street trees are visible from the road and surrounding buildings. Notwithstanding the presence of the parking ramp and driveway, the lawn and street trees collectively form a soft landscaped setting and an attractive natural foreground to Nos 95 and 97 that contributes in part to both its significance as an asset, as well as the ability to appreciate that significance.

Appeal proposals and effects

11. The front lawn would be removed and replaced with a large gravel area and a brick paved path. The adjacent forecourt at No 99 would also be altered, under a separate application, to incorporate brick paving to create 3 parking spaces and an access path. The two schemes would effectively create a merged forecourt area with no boundary separation, albeit different surface materials are proposed to distinguish the two areas.
12. The removal of the front lawn, and its replacement with gravel and brick paving, would significantly erode the soft, verdant quality of the building's frontage and diminish its undeveloped character. This green space forms an integral part of the building's historic context, from which it derives a measure of its significance. The proposal would introduce a harsh, urbanised appearance, undermining the visual harmony between the building and its surroundings. The change would be clearly perceptible from London Road, where the absence of the lawn would harm the

appearance of the listed curtilage, the appreciation of the building's setting, and its contribution to the street scene.

13. There would also be a loss of legibility to the listed curtilage which is clearly distinct from the hard surface at the adjacent non-listed No 99, by the existing front lawn. And whilst the proposed gravel and brick paving would marginally differ to that proposed at No 99, to create some visual difference in the surfaces, this does not overcome the loss of the lawn's softer and natural appearance.
14. Although I acknowledge that the lawn is in poor condition, this could be remedied through regular maintenance and cutting. Therefore, I do not consider that its current state justifies its removal.
15. The appellant argues that front lawns were incorporated into properties in the 20th century and would not likely have formed part of the original frontage at No 97. Even if that were the case, the existing front lawn nevertheless makes a positive contribution to the curtilage and setting of the listed building, from which it derives some of its special interest.
16. Examples of properties nearby without front gardens have been referred to by the appellant. However, it is not clear whether those properties previously had front gardens or if they relate to listed buildings, as in this case. Given the uncertainty relating to those examples, they do not assist in giving support in favour of this appeal.
17. The proposal also includes the provision of a new front boundary wall and bin store. Although the wall would partly be finished in brick, a material which differs to the stucco finish of the appeal building, it would nevertheless adjoin the wall at No 99 and have a unifying appearance in terms of its height, design and siting. The wall would incorporate piers and railings, that would neatly frame No 97's front lawn area and reintroduce a roadside boundary; a feature that would have likely formed part of the dwelling's historic layout, along with other properties along London Road. Moreover, the wall's low height would maintain clear views of the listed building without detracting from its contribution to the character of the road.
18. Box hedges would be planted immediately behind the wall/railings. This would help provide an attractive landscaped boundary between the listed curtilage and the road.
19. The proposed bin store would be positioned behind the front wall and comprise a small number of enclosures to enable the storage of various containers. These would be low-key in scale and contained behind the proposed boundary wall. Their position away from the listed building would result in a better arrangement in contrast to the somewhat random and more prominent placement of bins within the front garden that I observed during my site visit. Yet I have assessed the proposal as a whole, rather than the bin store in isolation, and its appearance in combination with the harsh gravel/brick surface materials would be visually inappropriate and harmful in the context of the listed curtilage.
20. The proposed front wall and planting would, in part, make a positive contribution, to the special interest of Nos 95 and 97, by creating an attractive formal boundary between the listed building and London Road. However, whilst I deem these heritage benefits, they do not overcome the loss of the front lawn area and the

detrimental effect this would have, in combination with the bin store, upon the listed building.

21. For these reasons, the proposal would fail to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed, 95 and 97 London Road and therefore would be contrary to the requirements of the Act.

Public benefits and balance

22. Paragraph 212 of the National Planning Policy Framework, (the Framework) advises that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to their conservation. Paragraph 213 goes on to advise that significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting and that this should have clear and convincing justification.
23. With reference to Paragraphs 214 and 215 of the Framework, in finding harm to the significance of designated heritage assets, the magnitude of that harm should be assessed. Given the extent of the development and works, relative to the significance of the Grade II listed building, the degree of harm is 'less than substantial' and at a moderate level within that spectrum of harm, but nevertheless, of considerable importance and weight. Under such circumstances, Paragraph 215 advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, which includes securing the asset's optimum viable use.
24. The proposal has resulted in investment into the property, which would have a small economic benefit, which carries limited weight in favour of the proposal as a public benefit. Similarly, planting an appropriate hedge species near the dwelling and front boundary may offer only minor benefits overall, yet it represents a valuable step toward improving the site's biodiversity.
25. I acknowledge the appellant's intentions to improve the appearance of the appeal building's frontage. Yet there is no convincing evidence to suggest that the residential use of the building would cease in the absence of these proposed changes, and it is not necessary to secure the optimum viability and long-term conservation of the building as a result.
26. Overall, the minor weight that I ascribe to the public benefits which would accrue from the proposal is not sufficient to outweigh the considerable importance and weight that I attach to the harm I have found.
27. Therefore, there would be insufficient public benefit to offset the identified harm, and the proposal does not accord with the Framework. I therefore conclude that the proposal fails to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed building at 95 and 97 London Road, which I am required to have special regard to by the Act. The proposal would also conflict with Policies EN1 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019) where they require, amongst other things, to conserve the significance of heritage assets and seek to protect an area's historic character and local distinctiveness.

Other Matters

28. There is dispute between the appellant and the Council regarding a previous side boundary wall that divided the front gardens of 97 from 99 London Road. The wall was removed in recent years, however, there is no evidence of the Council taking

Enforcement action regarding works to a listed building, regarding its removal. Given the lack of clarity on whether the wall is part of the listed building, as well as my intention to dismiss the appeals for other reasons, I have not assessed this matter.

Conclusion

29. **Appeal A:** The proposed development would conflict with the development plan. There are no material considerations which indicate that the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given, I conclude that Appeal A should be dismissed.
30. **Appeal B:** For the reasons given, I conclude that Appeal B should be dismissed.

RE Jones

INSPECTOR