



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 October 2025

by S Ramsden BSc (Hons) MA MA IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/D/25/3373169

1 Gravel Hill Cottages, Blagrove Lane, Caversham, Reading RG4 7DY

- 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 R Walker against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application reference is PL/25/0574.
 - The development proposed is for two / single storey rear and side extensions.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the appeal property and the surrounding area, including the setting of the Chilterns National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)).

Reasons

3. 1 Gravel Hill Cottages forms the left-hand half of a pair of semi-detached houses. They are brick built with a plain tiled roof, with traditional details typical of the late-19th/early-20th Century. Both houses retain their original fenestration pattern of smaller apertures within brickwork. They have symmetrical projecting rear wings, which have mono-pitched roofs with a small dormer window to each. The appeal property has a conservatory added to the rear of the projecting wing.
4. It is located on the edge of an established residential neighbourhood, predominantly of detached and semi-detached properties. Mature landscaping in the immediate area adds to its generally verdant suburban character. The view from the rear of the appeal property is towards open fields which lie within the AONB. To the front there are views into the site as Upper Warren Avenue turns sharply into Blagrove Lane.
5. The single storey extension would be wider than the full width of the main house and, following removal of the conservatory, would project a considerable distance into the rear garden. The two storey element would fill the return between the main building and the rear wing. The extension would obscure the majority of the rear wing, and the rear wall of the main building, as well as its eaves and lower section of its roof. The “crown roofs” particularly at first floor level would appear as awkward and incongruous additions. Furthermore, large areas of glazing would be in contrast to the fenestration pattern of the appeal property. The windows at first floor level would be particularly out of character with the host dwelling.

6. Due to their overall scale and mass, the proposed extensions would not respond positively to the local character and distinctiveness of the appeal property and would be a dominant and incongruous feature to both the rear and side of the building. Along with the loss of a substantial portion of the rear projecting wing, and the rear wall and eaves of the main building, this would result in harm to the character and appearance of the appeal property.
7. The proposals would project beyond the side of the existing house and would be visible from the corner of Upper Warren Avenue and Blagrove Lane. As an incongruous and awkward addition, it would have a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
8. The limited screening on the field boundary to the rear, and within the site, would mean that the proposal would also be highly visible from within the AONB. Due to its inappropriate design and urbanising nature, the proposal would cause a limited degree of harm to the setting of the AONB which has a predominantly rural character.
9. The proposals would not accord with the Council's Design Guide to House Extensions, Supplementary Planning Document, 2021, which seeks to ensure that extensions complement and do not appear overbearing to the existing dwelling. It also advises that windows and doors should be appropriate in terms of size, scale and/or placement and reflect the character and appearance of the existing dwelling.
10. For the reasons set out above, I therefore conclude that the proposal would result in harm to the character and appearance of the appeal property and the surrounding area. It would also cause a degree of harm to the setting of the AONB. It would therefore conflict with Policies CC7, H9 and EN13 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, 2019, which seek to ensure that development maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area and that extensions respect the character and appearance of the host dwelling.

Other Matters

11. The appellant has drawn attention to a number of residential properties in the surrounding area. Whilst the examples illustrate a degree of variety to the houses in the area, those extensions shown are of a form, materials and detailing that generally respect the character of the host buildings. Accordingly, these examples are of limited weight in my decision, and do not lead me to an alternative conclusion on the main issue.
12. There would be no adverse impacts on the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring dwellings, nor are there any identified highways or ecology issues. These are not factors which weigh in favour of allowing the appeal and do not diminish the harm that I have found on the main issue. The appellant states that the proposal would improve the functionality of the dwelling, but this does not justify the harm I have found in this case.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above, having considered the development plan as a whole and having regard to all other matters, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

S Ramsden

INSPECTOR