



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 October 2025

by E Worley BA (Hons) Dip EP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/W/25/3367585

7 Blagrove Street, Reading RG1 1PJ

- 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 La Baguette (Reading) Ltd against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PL/24/1353.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of the existing building (façade retained) and erection of a five-storey building with a café, bed and breakfast, and ancillary spaces.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the demolition of the existing building (façade retained) and erection of a five-storey building with a café, bed and breakfast, and ancillary spaces at 7 Blagrove Street, Reading RG1 1PJ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref PL/24/1353, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA) and whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area; and preserve the setting of the nearby listed buildings.

Reasons

3. The appeal site at 7 Blagrove Street (No. 7) comprises a 2 storey mid terraced building which includes a café at ground floor and bed and breakfast accommodation above. It is located within the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area (the CA). As the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal (the Appraisal) sets out, and I observed at my site visit, the special interest of the CA derives from a range of features. These include the variety of buildings of different ages and architectural styles, encompassing a high concentration of historic buildings, such as historic churches, municipal buildings, commercial buildings and C19 banks which convey the evolution of the area along the north-south route through the town across the River Kennet. The Appraisal indicates that the CA is generally a tightly knit urban form made up of continuous frontages of 2, 3, and 4 storey buildings beside streets of varying lengths and widths and includes the part-pedestrianised open space at Market Place and Town Hall Square, trees and statues/monuments.

4. The Appraisal identifies No. 7 as a building of townscape merit, which makes a positive contribution to the special interest of the CA and forms a NDHA. Given its relatively unaltered frontage, its significance is derived from its historic and architectural interest. In particular its front façade, which appears to be well preserved, retains original materials and detailing which form a positive element within the context of the CA.
5. The appeal would see the demolition of the existing building, with the exception of the front façade. Given that this is the most visible part of the NDHA contributing to its significance, the removal of the remainder of the building is not concerning and does not harm its significance. Like the existing building, the proposed 5 storey building would extend across the width of the plot frontage. In addition, the overall height of the building would not be dissimilar to those adjoining the site to either side, as well as others in the vicinity, which would address the existing disparity between No. 7 and the surrounding buildings in terms of height. Accordingly, the building would not be at odds with the prevailing urban grain or appear as a discordant feature within the streetscape by virtue of its overall height and scale.
6. The upper floors of the proposed development are shown to be set back from the front wall of the existing building, which is to be retained and incorporated into the proposed building. The retention of the existing building façade at ground and first floor level, would reflect the arrangement to the upper floors of the adjoining buildings in the row. This would also broadly reflect the aims of the Appraisal which set out that the general presumption should be in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area. Moreover, despite the additional scale of the building to the upper parts, the setback of the built form, together with the use of contrasting style and materials, would serve to ensure the proposal would not detract from the architectural interest of the existing building in terms of its façade, or undermine its presence in the streetscape.
7. The proposed size and position of the windows in the front elevation of the building, by virtue of the internal floor height and resulting cill level would differ from the height of the windows in the immediately adjoining buildings. Nonetheless, given the variety of building styles, including a range of window designs, and proportions, and the resulting lack of any tangible consistency in that regard or significant regularity in the existing fenestration, the building would not appear as an incongruent or unsympathetic addition to the built form of this part of Blagrove Street by virtue of the arrangement of the window openings to the upper floors. In addition, the contemporary appearance of the proposed upper floors would not be at odds with the additions to the higher parts of the neighbouring building, Forbury View.
8. The existing recessed entrance door to the front elevation of the building currently serves the first floor accommodation, independently to the ground floor. While this arrangement would be taken away as a consequence of the proposal, given the ornamental façade of the existing building would be retained intact, this would not affect the understanding of the existing building to a degree to give rise to material harm to its significance.
9. The site lies in proximity to a number of listed buildings. The Council's reason for refusal cites the Town Hall, which is opposite the appeal site. The Town Hall is a Grade II* listed building and, as such, a designated heritage asset of the highest

significance. It comprises a group of municipal buildings which include the Town Hall, 2 Concert Halls, a Museum and the Register Office for Reading, but which formerly also housed the Library and Art college, together with office space.

10. From the evidence before me, the special interest and significance of the Grade II* listed building is derived from its architectural and historic interest, including its impressive scale, contrasting materials and detailing, representing the prestige of the town as it grew and demonstrating the expansion of the functions housed within a town hall building during the C19. In so far as it relates to the appeal, its special interest and significance is also drawn, in part, from its setting. The surrounding townscape which contributes to the setting of the Grade II* listed building comprises frontage-built form of various architectural styles and ages, including modern buildings of a considerable size, within which the listed building sits comfortably, allowing an appreciation of its age, function and appearance.
11. While the proposed 5 storey building would be greater in height than the existing building which occupies the site, it would be clearly subordinate in size, scale and massing to the Grade II* listed building. Moreover, it would infill a narrow gap within the existing frontage development along the part of Blagrove Street in which it would sit. Thus, for the reasons set out, it would not disrupt the existing built form of the surrounding townscape, which comprises an urban setting including a broad range of architectural styles, including modern buildings of considerable scale. Taking account of these factors, the proposed development would not compete with, nor detract from, the Grade II* listed building when the buildings are seen together in views along Blagrove Street. Furthermore, views towards the Grade II* listed building, in particular those across the open space of Town Hall Square would remain uninterrupted. Consequently, the attributes which are integral to the assets special interest and significance would be preserved.
12. For the foregoing reasons I conclude that the proposal would not have an adverse impact upon the character, appearance and significance of the host building or undermine the contribution it makes to the significance of the CA. Accordingly, it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA as a designated heritage asset. Furthermore, it would preserve the setting and special interest, and would not harm the significance, of the Grade II* listed building opposite the site. In that regard it would not conflict with the aims of Policies CC7, CR15, EN1, EN3 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, adopted November 2019 which seek development of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area, and responds positively to its local context and creates or reinforces local character and distinctiveness and protects and where possible enhance heritage assets and their settings.

Other Matters

13. The appeal site is also close to a number of other listed buildings including the Grade II Queen Victoria Jubilee Statue, Grade II Drinking fountain on the south side of St Laurence's Church tower, facing south towards Market Place, and the Grade I Church of St Laurence. From the information before me and my observations on site, the special interest and significance of these heritage assets derives, in part, from their historic and architectural interests, as well as their group value together with the municipal buildings which make up the Town Hall. Having regard to the scale and siting of the proposed development and its position relative

to these, I am satisfied that the setting of the listed buildings and therefore their special interest would be preserved, and their significance would not be harmed.

14. The Council's second refusal reason suggests that a legal agreement pursuant to Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 would be required to prevent the use of the proposed bed and breakfast accommodation for permanent residential occupation, which there is no dispute between the parties would not be appropriate due to the size of the units. While I note the Council's contention that a condition to restrict the occupancy would fail the test of enforceability, given the nature of the proposed use, which is akin to a seasonal or holiday let use, there is no clear reason why a condition to restrict the use to bed and breakfast accommodation, so as to prevent occupation as a permanent home, would not be workable, particularly given the Council's powers to enforce such an occupancy condition in the usual way.
15. Concern is expressed by an interested party regarding the effects of the development on the living conditions of the occupiers of the adjoining property, Forbury View, in terms of overlooking, overshadowing, loss of light and outlook. The Council has not objected to the proposal on these grounds. Given the window position and staggered configuration of the proposal, alongside the findings of the appellant's Daylight and Sunlight Assessment¹, I have no reason to disagree.
16. Furthermore, by virtue of the town centre location and scale and nature of the development, there is no compelling evidence that the proposal would lead to levels or types of activity that would give rise to disturbance of the occupiers of the neighbouring residential properties through additional noise.

Conditions

17. The conditions set out in the accompanying schedule are based on those suggested by the Council should the appeal be allowed. I have considered these having regard to the advice set out in both the Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance. In addition to the standard condition relating to the commencement of the development, I have imposed a condition specifying the relevant drawings, in the interests of clarity.
18. In the interests of the character and appearance of the area, including the special interest and significance of the heritage assets, a condition regarding the submission of details and samples of external materials is necessary. A condition to agree details for the protection of the façade of the building, and any restoration work, is necessary to safeguard the significance of the NDHA. This is a pre-commencement condition because appropriate measures need to be implemented before work on site can take place.
19. While no bats were seen entering or emerging from the building during the appellant's Emergence and Activity Bat Survey, due to the timeframe of the decision making, a precautionary approach is required. A condition is therefore necessary to require an updated survey, including compliance with any mitigation and compensation measures therein, as well as a condition to secure appropriate enhancement measures, to ensure that protected species are suitably protected and in the interests of biodiversity. The former is a pre-commencement condition

¹ Daylight and Sunlight Assessment by T16 Design Ltd dated May 2024

because the protection measures and mitigation need to be agreed before any works on site take place.

20. To safeguard the living conditions of the occupiers of the neighbouring properties a condition is necessary to require details of any mechanical plant, prior to its installation. Conditions to require a Construction Method Statement, details of refuse storage and a Delivery and Servicing Plan are necessary in the interests of highway safety and the living conditions of neighbouring residents. The former is a pre-commencement condition to ensure the development is carried out in an appropriate way from the outset.
21. I have amended the suggested cycle storage condition to secure the provision of the bike store as shown on the proposed plans, in the interests of sustainable travel. Given the archaeological potential of the site a condition to secure a written scheme of investigation is necessary. This is a pre-commencement condition to ensure any features of archaeological importance are appropriately identified before any development takes place.
22. A condition to restrict the use of the development for bed and breakfast accommodation, and not permanent dwellings is necessary given the size of the units.
23. The Council's suggested conditions to secure suitable emission rates appear to relate to new residential development. I have not been provided with any justification to suggest they would be necessary in the case of the appeal proposal, for holiday accommodation.

Conclusion

24. The proposed development would not conflict with the development plan, and there are no material considerations which indicate that the decision should be made other than in accordance with it. Therefore, for the foregoing reasons and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

E Worley

INSPECTOR

Schedule of Conditions

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawing nos:

2205_P_00_G200_001_A Proposed Ground Floor Plan
2205_P_01_G200_001_A Proposed 1st Floor
2205_P_02_G200_001_A Proposed 2nd Floor
2205_P_03_G200_001_A Proposed 3rd Floor
2205_P_04_G200_001_A Proposed 4th Floor

2205_P_RF_G200_001_A Proposed Roof Plan
2205_E_03_G200_001_A Proposed Side Elevation
2205_E_01_G200_002_A Proposed Front Elevation
2205_E_02_G200_001_A Proposed Rear Elevation

- 3) No development shall commence above ground level until a schedule of the details/samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details/samples and shall be retained as such thereafter.
- 4) Prior to the commencement of the development, including any demolition work, details of measures to be taken to secure and protect the façade of the building, which is to be retained, from any accidental damage, and details of any necessary repair/restoration work to this part of the building to incorporate it into the proposed development, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
- 5) Prior to the commencement of the development an updated Emergence and Activity Bat Survey, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with any necessary precautionary mitigation and compensation measures therein.
- 6) Prior to the commencement of any development above ground level, details of biodiversity enhancements, to include two bird and two bat boxes, bricks or tiles built into the walls of the development shall be submitted and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The biodiversity enhancements shall thereafter be installed as approved and a short letter report (including photos of the ricks/boxes/tiles in situ), stating that the bat and bird roosting facilities have been installed as per the approved plan is to be submitted to the local planning authority prior to the occupation of the dwelling.
- 7) No mechanical plant shall be installed until a noise assessment of the proposed mechanical plant has been submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The assessment shall be carried out in accordance with BS4142:2014 methodology. The predicted specific sound level (LAeq,TR) (with reference to BS:4142) as measured at a point 1 metre external to the nearest noise-sensitive facade shall be at least 10dB below the pre-existing background sound level, LA90,T when all plant/equipment (or any part of it) is in operation. The predicted rating level, LAr,Tr (specific sound level plus any adjustment for the characteristic features of the sound) as measured at a point 1 metre external to the nearest noise-sensitive façade (habitable window of a dwelling) shall not exceed the pre-existing background sound level, LA90,T when all plant/equipment (or any part of it) is in operation. The plant shall be installed in accordance with the assessment and shall thereafter be retained and maintained so that it operates to the same standard.

- 8) No development shall take place, including any works of demolition, until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The Statement shall provide for:
- a) the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors;
 - b) loading and unloading of plant and materials;
 - c) storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development;
 - d) the erection and maintenance of security hoarding including decorative displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate;
 - e) identification of any footpath closures or road closures needed during construction;
 - f) wheel washing facilities;
 - g) measures for controlling the use of site lighting whether required for safe working or for security purposes;
 - h) measures to control the emission of dust, dirt and noise during demolition and construction;
 - i) details of pest control measures following any demolition required; and
 - j) delivery, demolition and construction working hours.

The approved Construction Method Statement shall be adhered to throughout the demolition and construction period.

- 9) Prior to the first use of the development hereby approved the bike store shown on dwg. no. 2205_P_00_G200_001_A Proposed Ground Floor Plan shall be provided. It shall be kept free of obstruction and retained for the intended purposes thereafter in perpetuity.
- 10) Notwithstanding the approved drawings, prior to the first use of the development hereby approved, details of refuse and recycling storage sufficient for the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved details shall be fully implemented before first use of any part of the development and the areas of land so provided shall not be used for any purposes other than the storage (prior to disposal) or the collection of refuse and recycling and shall be thereafter retained and maintained as such.
- 11) Prior to the first use of the development hereby approved, a Delivery and Servicing Plan to manage how vehicles, including refuse and recycling collection vehicles, shall access the development without creating safety concerns and congestion based on the anticipated number of vehicle trips associated with delivery and servicing vehicles for the development shall be submitted to the local planning authority for approval in writing. Thereafter deliveries and servicing will be carried out in accordance with the approved Delivery and Servicing Plan.
- 12) No development (including demolition) shall take place until:
- (i) an archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority; and
 - (ii) any necessary safeguarding measures to ensure the preservation in situ of important archaeological remains and/or further archaeological investigation and recording identified in the WSI have been undertaken in accordance with a

specification and timetable that shall first have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

The development should be carried out in full accordance with the approved details within the WSI.

- 13) The bed and breakfast accommodation hereby approved shall be occupied as holiday accommodation only and shall not be occupied as a sole or main place of residence. An up-to-date register shall be kept at the holiday accommodation hereby permitted and be made available for inspection by the local planning authority upon request. The register shall contain details of the names of all of the occupiers of the accommodation, their main home addresses and their date of arrival and departure from the accommodation.

******* end of conditions *******