



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 February 2026

by **E Pickernell BSc MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 February 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/W/25/3375145

Flat 1, 92 Albert Road, Caversham, Reading RG4 7PL

- 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 Widbrook Developments Ltd against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PL/23/0663.
 - The development proposed is erection of hoarding as a means of enclosure to secure an unoccupied building.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for erection of hoarding as a means of enclosure to secure an unoccupied building at Flat 1, 92 Albert Road, Reading RG4 7PL in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref PL/23/0663, and the plans numbered, PR11.1-101 Rev B, PR11.1-102 Rev A, PR11.1-103 Rev B subject to the following condition:
 - 1) The structure hereby permitted shall be removed from the site, and the land restored to its former condition, or an alternative condition on or before 18 months from the date of this decision in accordance with a scheme of work that shall first have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved works shall be retained as such thereafter.

Preliminary Matters

2. I am aware that there is another appeal¹ under consideration at the appeal site, however this has little bearing on the proposal before me which I have considered on its own merits.
3. Within their statement of case the appellant describes the proposed hoarding as temporary. The Council is concerned that the proposal was not described as such on the application form and therefore that the appeal scheme is substantially different to that which was considered at application stage. However, the substantive part of the proposal which is the erection of hoarding is unchanged from the application and temporary consents can only be legally secured by the imposition of a condition, regardless of the description.
4. A revised site plan drawing has been submitted with the appeal which was not listed on the Council's decision notice. The differences entail minor corrections to the positioning of the hoarding. Given the very minor nature of the change, I am satisfied that no party would be prejudiced by my taking it into account.

¹ APP/E0345/W/25/3376303

5. Consequently, I do not consider that the scheme before me is substantially different from that which was considered at application stage and I have considered the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

6. The main issues are:

- the effect of the proposals on the character and appearance of the area; and
- the effect of the proposal on biodiversity.

Reasons

Character and appearance

7. The appeal site comprises a generous plot containing a detached building, located prominently at the junction of Albert Road and Chelford Way. Albert Road, in the vicinity of the appeal site is characterised by relatively substantial buildings, the frontages of which are well landscaped. Boundary treatments nearby typically comprise walls, hedging and sections of fencing. Chelford Way is characterised by well landscaped front gardens which are generally open and not defined by solid boundary features. Mature vegetation in the area provides an attractive, established character.
8. The appeal scheme entails the provision of hoarding, comprising solid fencing and gates of approximately 2.45m high at the back edge of the pavement along the southeast and southwest boundaries of the site. The hoarding is already in place.
9. The side boundary of the appeal site which fronts Chelford Way is considerable in length, resulting in a fence which is longer as well as taller than is typical in the area. Given its location directly adjacent to the pavement and its solid design, the hoarding represents an imposing and incongruous feature within the streetscape. It contrasts unacceptably with the open frontages of the properties on Chelford Way and dominates the streetscene on the northeastern side of the street. The hoarding is highly visible from public vantage points near to the site and therefore has a harmful effect on the overall character and appearance of the area.
10. The appellant has indicated that the hoarding is proposed as a temporary structure and has suggested a condition limiting the retention of the hoarding to a period of 18 months. The visual effects of the fence would not be diminished in the short term, and I recognise that it has already been in place for a considerable time. However, allowing the proposal on a temporary basis would ensure that it would not be a permanent feature and would give certainty that it would be removed in due course.
11. I therefore consider that allowing the proposal on a temporary basis would reduce the overall harm which would occur as a result of the hoarding to a moderate level.
12. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposal would result in harm to the character and appearance of the area and would therefore conflict with Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 2019) (LP) which seeks to ensure that developments are of a high design quality and maintain and enhance the appearance of the area.

13. The Council refer to Policy H9 of the LP in the first reason for refusal. However, this policy refers to house extensions and ancillary accommodation and therefore has not been determinative in my consideration of this appeal.

Biodiversity

14. The application was submitted prior to April 2024 and as such is not subject to mandatory biodiversity net gain (BNG). However, Policy EN12 of the LP states that on all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity. Policy EN14 of the LP seeks to protect trees and hedges from damage or removal where they are of importance.
15. The parties differ in respect of the extent to which the removal of vegetation was necessitated by the erection of the hoarding. I have limited details before me regarding the biodiversity value of the site prior to the proposed fence being erected, or the direct impact of the fence upon it.
16. Planning permission has been granted for the conversion and renovation of the existing building on the site. It is reasonable to assume that the proposals for the appeal site include replacement boundary treatment and landscaping. However, for the avoidance of doubt, and in case the approved scheme is not implemented, I shall impose a condition requiring that once the fence is removed, the land is either returned to its former condition or an alternative to be agreed with the Council. This would have the effect of returning the site to at least its former level biodiversity, ensuring no net loss.
17. I have given consideration to the Council's suggested conditions which would secure a biodiversity net gain plan and a scheme of biodiversity enhancements. However, the proposal is exempt from mandatory BNG and it would be inappropriate to seek such enhancements and gains via conditions.
18. Subject to such a condition, I am satisfied that the proposal would not have a harmful effect on biodiversity. It would therefore accord with Policies CC7, EN12 and EN14 of the LP. Together these seek to ensure that development proposals are appropriately landscaped, protect biodiversity and trees and make provision for planting.

Other Matters

19. Set against the harm which I have identified in respect of the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, the proposal results in benefits in respect of the safety and security of the site and public safety. I noted at my site visit that scaffolding has been erected at the existing building at the appeal site and that several windows are broken.
20. As such I accept that it is necessary to secure the site to ensure that trespassers do not enter the site which would result in risk of harm to themselves and the security of the appeal building. The council contend that the effect could be achieved by a lower fence which would fall within permitted development, however this would be unlikely to provide the level of security required. I therefore accept that the hoarding is necessary and afford significant weight to the benefits of the proposal.

Planning Balance

21. The proposal would result in moderate harm to the character and appearance of the area and would therefore conflict with the Local Plan. Applications are required to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. I therefore attach significant weight to the conflict with the Local Plan.
22. On the other hand, the proposal would result in significant benefits in terms of public safety to which I attach significant weight. The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to ensure that developments create places that are safe. On the basis that the harm would occur on a temporary basis, I conclude that the material considerations are of sufficient weight to indicate that the appeal should be determined otherwise than in accordance with the development plan.

Conditions

23. Other than a condition in respect of the temporary grant of consent and the reinstatement of the land, no other conditions are necessary given the retrospective nature of the proposal.

Conclusion

24. The proposed development would conflict with the development plan, but material considerations indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above the appeal is allowed.

E Pickernell

INSPECTOR