

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 3 June 2020

ITEM NO.

Ward: Abbey

App No: 192052/HOU

Address: 45 Watlington Street

Proposal: Single storey rear extension, alterations to fenestration and provision of roof light to forward roof slope

Applicant: Mr & Mrs Murphy

Date validated: 27/12/19

Target Date: 21/02/20 Extension: 06/03/20

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT

Conditions to include:

1. Time limit for implementation
2. In accordance with approved plans
3. Materials to match
4. Window and roof light details to be submitted
5. No use of roof as terrace/balcony
6. Obscure-glazing
7. Hours of work

Informatives to include:

1. Terms and conditions
2. Need for building regulations
3. Encroachment
4. Construction and Demolition subject to Environmental Health
5. Positive and proactive

1. INTRODUCTION

This application was deferred at the 4 March 2020 Planning Applications Committee meeting to allow Members to carry out an accompanied site visit. However, social distancing measures in response to Covid19 came in before the site visit could take place - scheduled for 26 March.

2. By then the Agenda papers for PAC on 1 April had been published but that meeting was cancelled so this application has been hanging in limbo. Helpfully at your last meeting (29 April 2020) it was agreed that officers could provide additional photographs to help Members understand sites better while site visits are suspended.

3. Therefore, this application is being presented to you with additional photographs to be provided in time for your meeting.. The recommendation and officer advice remains as set out in the previous reports to Planning Applications Committee, which are appended to this report below.

COMMITTEE REPORT

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READING BOROUGH COUNCIL	ITEM NO.
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 01/04/20	

Ward: Abbey

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 45 Watlington Street is a modest three storey, with basement, mid-terraced property located within Eldon Square Conservation Area. The property benefits from a loft conversion, with front and rear dormers. The dormers combine to exceed the original ridge height. The dormers are unauthorised but have been in situ for in excess of ten years, so are immune from enforcement action due to the passing of time. Beyond the rear garden is located a parking court for Barkham Mews.

1.2 The Eldon Square Conservation Area appraisal notes that the character of the area is predominantly residential, with Watlington Street being the primary street within the area.

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- 1.3 *“Its street frontage of short rows of two and three storey houses is punctuated by two significant places of worship and Watlington House, a 17th Century clothier’s mansion, now offices”.*
- 1.4 45 Watlington Street is identified as a Building of Townscape Merit, as are all the unlisted buildings along Watlington Street. The adjoining properties at 47 and 49 Watlington Street are a storey taller, and benefit from rearward gables and further extensions. The adjoining property at 43 Watlington Street is of the same original form and has not been extended to the rear.
- 1.5 The application was called in to be determined at Planning Applications Committee by Councillor Page, following neighbour objections.
- 1.6 Members decided to defer further consideration of this application pending an accompanied site visit. This was scheduled to take place on 26 March but following government advice on social distancing to combat Covid-19 officers instead attended and carried out a video recording to provide Councillors with additional information.
- 1.7 Appended is the report as presented at the 4th March committee.

Appendix - Original Committee Report from 4 March 2020

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 04/03/20

ITEM NO.

Ward: Abbey

App No: 192052/HOU

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Proposal: Single storey rear extension, alterations to fenestration and provision of roof light to forward roof slope

Applicant: Mr & Mrs Murphy

Date validated: 27/12/19

Target Date: 21/02/20

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 45 Watlington Street is a modest three storey, with basement, mid-terraced property located within Eldon Square Conservation Area. The property benefits from a loft conversion, with front and rear dormers. The dormers combine to exceed the original ridge height. The dormers are unauthorised but have been in situ for in excess of ten years, so are immune from enforcement action due to the passing of time. Beyond the rear garden is located a parking court for Barkham Mews.

1.2 The Eldon Square Conservation Area appraisal notes that the character of the area is predominantly residential, with Watlington Street being the primary street within the area.

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- 1.4 45 Watlington Street is identified as a Building of Townscape Merit, as are all the unlisted buildings along Watlington Street. The adjoining properties at 47 and 49 Watlington Street are a storey taller, and benefit from rearward gables and further extensions. The adjoining property at 43 Watlington Street is of the same original form and has not been extended to the rear.
- 1.5 The application was called in to be determined at Planning Applications Committee by Councillor Page, following neighbour objections.



Site Location Plan

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 Planning permission is sought for the erection of a single storey rear extension, alterations to fenestration and the provision of roof lights. The rear extension would project to a depth of 2.1m, extending at a width of 4.6m. A distance of 0.2m would be maintained to the sideward boundaries with 43 and 47 Watlington Street. The extension would have a flat roof at a

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height of 2.9m. A roof light would be located within the flat roof, with bi-fold doors located to the rear elevation. The extension would be of brick construction, to match the existing property.

- 2.2 To the rear elevation, the existing first floor windows would be replaced. The new windows would be in broadly the same location as the existing, but with the provision of a smaller, obscure-glazed, window to serve a proposed bathroom. The proposed windows would be white uPVC, to match those of rest of the property.
- 2.3 To the forward roof slope of the original property, and the northward roof slope of the front dormer would be located roof lights. The roof lights would be in a 'Conservation Area style'. The agent has confirmed the specification of the roof lights to be Keylight-Conservation Centre Pivot-01-550x780mm.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 171787/HOU - Single storey rear extension and replacement of existing front and rear dormers - Withdrawn 18/12/17
- 3.2 191353/PRE - Various external works including single storey rear extension, elevational alterations and reconstruction of dormers - Observations sent 08/10/19 *Officer note: the pre-app response gave no support for any dormer to the forward roof slope. The provision of a rearward dormer was deemed to be more acceptable but would require substantial reduction from that which was proposed, in order to mitigate against harm to the character and appearance of the property and wider Conservation Area and to neighbouring residential amenity. No objection was raised to the proposed single storey rear extension, or the proposed elevational alterations, subject to details being agreed at application stage.*

4. CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 Conservation Area Advisory Committee
No response received to consultation.
- 4.2 Reading Civic Society
No response received to consultation.
- 4.3 Neighbouring owners and occupiers at 43 and 47 Watlington Street, Wesley Methodist Church, Queens Road and 1-18 Barkham Mews were consulted by letter. Four letters of representation were received, with regard to the following:
 - The rear extension would cause an unreasonable degree of overshadowing and light loss to the kitchen of 43 Watlington Street
 - There are no rear extensions in the terraced row from The Lyndhurst, as they would impact negatively on neighbours in terms of light falling on the back of houses and gardens

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- Loss of light and overshadowing does not apply to 45 Watlington Street as it is already overshadowed by 47 Watlington Street, a building constructed decades ago
- In a Conservation Area any development should take account of the effect on the architectural and historic character of the area
- There is little difference to the plans submitted under 171787/HOU, to which Reading Civic Society and the Historic Buildings Consultant objected to
- The building line of 47 Watlington Street should not be used as an excuse to overshadow other properties
- The extension will not provide a greater degree of privacy to adjacent properties
- The rear extension will cause a loss of light to the kitchen and dining room of 47 Watlington Street
- A restriction on hours of work condition should be applied to any permission

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework, among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.

5.2 The application has been assessed against the following policies:

5.3 National Planning Policy Framework

5.4 Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

Policy CC1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Policy CC7 - Design and the Public Realm

Policy CC8 - Safeguarding Amenity

Policy EN1 - Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

Policy EN3 - Enhancement of Conservation Areas

Policy EN4 - Locally Important Heritage Assets

Policy H9 - House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation

5.5 Supplementary Planning Guidance - A Design Guide to House Extensions (2003)

6. APPRAISAL

6.1 Design and impact on the character of the surrounding area

6.2 Policy CC7 requires that all development be of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading

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in which it is located. Policy EN1 requires all proposals to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Policy EN3 notes that positive consideration will be given to proposals which take the opportunity to enhance the character of Conservation Areas. This might include restoring original building features and removing inappropriate additions or alterations.

- 6.3 In assessing the proposals, officers are mindful of the 171787/HOU submission, as well as the relevant refused application at 51 Watlington Street for a front dormer (170611/HOU) and its subsequent dismissal at appeal. Indeed, in his appeal decision the Planning Inspector noted the existing front dormer at 45 Watlington Street to be a significantly jarring element, harmful to the street scene and Conservation Area.
- 6.4 Upon receipt of the application, officers were concerned that the proposed plans included the unauthorised dormers, and that any resultant planning permission could be construed as granted permission for them. An amended plan was requested, with the annotation 'no alteration to current form' applied to the dormers. This has been received and is satisfactory. Were it to be applied for, neither dormer would receive planning permission. They are considered to cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the original property and the Conservation Area setting. Unfortunately, due to the passing of time no action can be taken against the unauthorised dormers.
- 6.5 Section 171B of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) sets time limits for enforcement action to be taken: "*Where there has been a breach of planning control consisting of the carrying out without planning permission of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, no enforcement action may be taken after the end of the period of four years beginning with the date on which the operations were substantially completed*". Google Maps images show the dormers in situ and substantially completed in May 2012, comfortably in excess of four years prior to the date of this application. There is no mechanism by which the Local Planning Authority can reasonably expect the dormers to be removed, despite this being preferable. The application will instead be assessed on its own individual merit.
- 6.6 The Council's Design Guide to House Extensions states that planning permission will not usually be granted for rear extensions that are longer than 4m when measured from the back of the original house. Rear extensions should be located as far away from side boundaries as possible to protect light main rooms, and to safeguard outlook from, adjacent properties. For terraced housing, rear extensions (including single storey ones) can have a significant and detrimental impact on neighbouring properties and the general appearance of the terrace.

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- 6.7 45 Watlington Street is a relatively modest property but benefits from a rear garden of approximately 7m depth. 47 Watlington Street, to the south of the site, benefits from a longer plot, but also a rearward gable and extensions. 43 Watlington Street is not extended to the rear and has the same plot depth as the application site. Policy CC1 reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained within the NPPF, whereby a positive approach is taken to considering development proposals.
- 6.8 With a depth of 2.1m, the proposed rear extension would reflect the scale and proportion of the original property. Flat roof extensions with a height of 2.9m are common across the Borough, including on mid-terraced properties. The bulk and mass of the extension is not therefore considered to be excessive, nor would it detract from the appearance of the original property. Constructed of brick to match the existing property, its original character would not be significantly harmed.
- 6.9 The replacement of fenestration to the rear, and the provision of roof lights, is not considered to cause harm to the character and appearance of the original property, or the Conservation Area setting. Detail has been provided with regard to the specification of the roof lights, which would be in a 'conservation style'. This is deemed acceptable and would be secured by condition. The windows to be replaced are non-original white uPVC. It is considered appropriate to require the replacement windows to be in a style in keeping with the Conservation Area setting. An appropriate condition requiring details of the windows to be submitted for approval prior to installation will therefore be applied. Subject to this, the proposal is in accordance with Policies CC1, CC7, EN1, EN3, EN4 and H9 of the Local Plan and the Council's Design Guide SPG.
- 6.10 Impact on neighbouring residential amenity
- 6.11 Policy CC8 states that development will not cause a detrimental impact to the living environment of existing residential properties, in terms of privacy and overlooking, access to sunlight and daylight, visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development and harm to outlook. It is accepted that residents of neighbouring properties will notice the implementation of the proposed development, particularly the proposed 2.1m deep rear extension. To a degree, harm would be caused to the occupants of 43 and 47 Watlington Street in terms of access to sunlight and daylight, and visual dominance and overbearing effects. However, it is not considered that this degree of harm would be significant, given the modest depth of the extension.
- 6.12 Each application is assessed on its own individual merit. However, there are often similarities between schemes and replications of scenarios, particularly with regard to householder development. Reading benefits from a number of terraced properties, many of which have been extended. Considering this, and by applying Policy CC1, a positive approach is taken towards development. The application site benefits from a rear garden of

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approximately 7m depth. As a result of the proposal, approximately 5m of rear garden would be retained. As stated above, the proposed rear extension is therefore considered proportionate to the original property and its plot. It should also be noted that under Permitted Development, the applicant could erect a single storey rear extension of slightly greater height, and approximately 1m greater depth, without requiring planning permission. In this context, the harm that a 2.1m deep rear extension will cause to neighbouring residential amenity must be balanced.

6.13 Officers acknowledge the concerns raised by occupants of the neighbouring properties in terms of light loss, overshadowing and visual dominance. However, it is not considered that any significantly harmful impacts on neighbouring residential amenity will arise as a result of the proposed development. The proposal is therefore in accordance with Policies CC1 and CC8 of the Local Plan and the Council's Design Guide SPG.

6.14 Other matters

6.15 In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics including age and disability. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular planning application. In terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

7. CONCLUSION

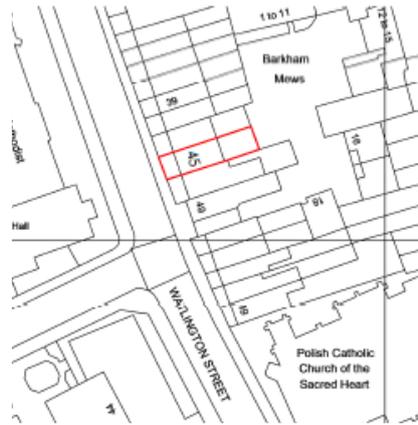
7.1 The proposal is considered to be acceptable in the context of national and local planning policy, as set out in this report. The application is recommended for approval on this basis.

8. PLANS

Drawing No: 218-A1-08-B - Site Location, Proposed Site Plan, Proposed Floor and Roof Plans and Elevations (received 22/01/20)

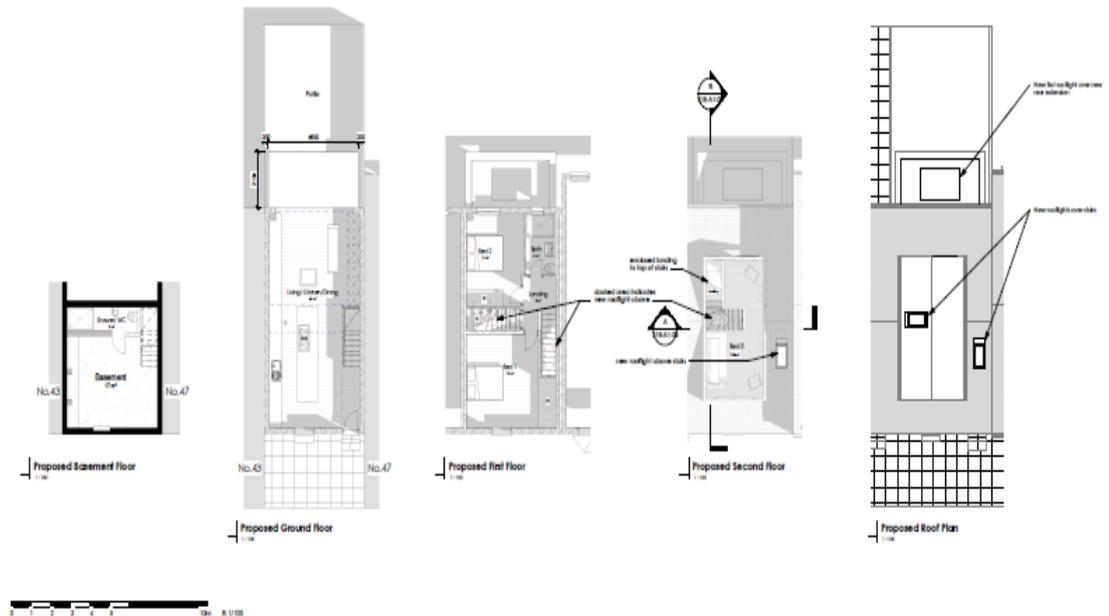
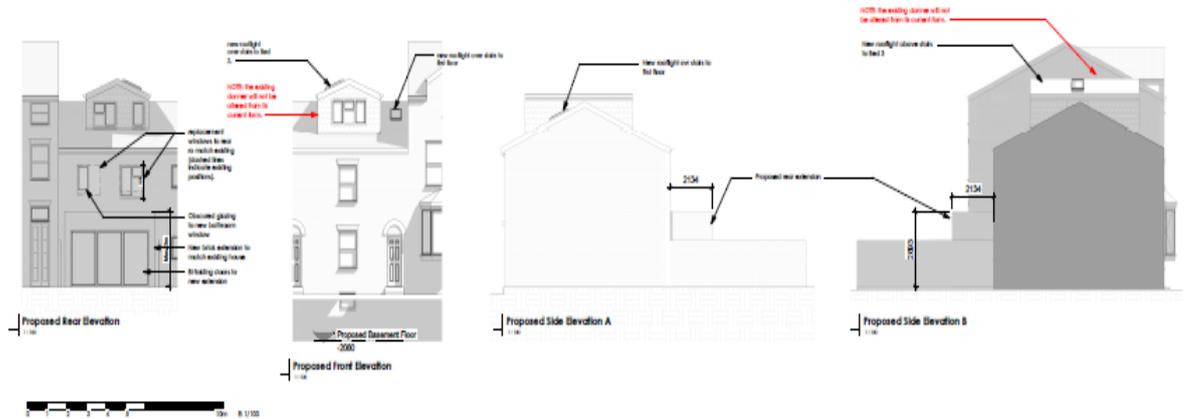
Case Officer: Tom Hughes

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Existing Plans

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Proposed Plans