

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL: APPEAL DECISION REPORT

### PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 28 February 2024

**Ward:** Battle

**Appeal No:** APP/E0345/W/23/3325238

**Planning Ref:** 221038/FUL

**Site:** 37 Hilcot Road, Reading, RG30 2SX

**Proposal:** Demolition of existing building and erection of three new residential dwellings (C3 Use Class).

**Decision level:** Delegated decision on 23/02/2023

**Method:** Written representations

**Decision:** Appeal Dismissed

**Date Determined:** 09/02/2024

**Inspector:** N Robinson BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

#### 1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The appeal site related to a workshop building located at the end of Hilcot Road. Oxford Road is located to the north of the site.

1.2 A previous application on the site was refused 28/07/2021 for "Demolition of existing building for development of a proposed new build to accommodate 4 residential units".

1.3 The application, subject of this appeal, was refused under delegated powers in February 2023 for three reasons, summarised as:

1. Unsympathetic development in its context and overdevelopment of the site
2. Poor quality of outlook and daylight for future occupiers
3. Absence of legal agreement to secure affordable housing.

1.4 The applicant appealed against this decision to the Planning Inspectorate.

1.5 During the course of the appeal, a S106 legal agreement was completed to secure an affordable housing contribution. Upon completion of the legal agreement, the Council confirmed withdrawal of this related reason for refusal.

#### 2 SUMMARY OF DECISION

2.1 The Inspector considered the main issues to be:

- The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area
- Whether the proposal would provide satisfactory living conditions for future occupiers with particular regard to outlook and levels of daylight

2.2 On the first main issue, the Inspector acknowledged that the existing building, due to its height and industrial appearance, appears as a discordant feature within the residential street scene. The Inspector considered, however, that whilst the proposed building would take some design cues from surrounding properties, due to the detailed design of the proposal, namely projecting gables on front elevation, it would also appear as a discordant feature within the traditional terraced street scene. The Inspector considered that the proposal would appear unsympathetic and unduly prominent. It would also be readily apparent in the street scene due to the site's prominent location and would weaken established local character and appearance. The Inspector noted that the proposal would also appear cramped and contrived in appearance when viewed from the rear of the Oxford Road, due to limited separation between the proposed units and neighbouring built form. The Inspector concluded on this point that the proposal would not satisfactorily integrate with the area and would conflict with Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

2.3 Moving on to the second issue, the Inspector agreed that, due to the depth of the open plan kitchen and living room at ground floor level, combined with small rooflights, that there would

be limited – and insufficient – levels of light to the rear parts of the rooms. This would be compounded by the rear boundary wall being in close proximity, resulting in a poor and oppressive outlook for future occupiers. The Inspector concluded on this point that the proposal would result in unacceptable living conditions for future occupiers and would conflict with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

2.6 In providing an overall conclusion, the Inspector considered that whilst the proposal would provide three additional dwellings, given the small scale this would be a modest contribution. The Inspector acknowledged the factors weighing in favour of the scheme (brownfield site at low risk of flooding, off-site affordable housing contribution, some economic contribution through construction, removal of existing warehouse noise and disturbance) but ultimately considered the proposal to cause harm to the character and appearance of the area and inadequate living conditions such that these matters were not considered to outweigh the identified harm.

2.7 The Inspector concluded that all the Council's reasons for refusal should be supported and dismissed the appeal.

**Head of Planning, Development & Regulatory Services Comment:**

This is a pleasing and clear-cut appeal decision, with the Inspector endorsing the conclusion reached by Officers and agreeing with each reason for refusal.

**Case officer: Ethne Humphreys**



Site Photo - view towards front of site



Proposed Site Plan



Proposed Front Elevation