

Ward: Redlands

Appeal Nos: APP/E0345/W/23/3323732 and APP/E0345/W/23/3323751

Planning Ref: 220123/FUL and 220124/LBC

Site: 9 Eldon Square, Reading, RG1 4DP

Proposal: The development proposed is demolition of existing garages and car port, followed by construction of one detached three-bedroom, 1.5 storey detached dwelling, with associated car parking, cycle and bin storage.

Decision level: Delegated decision on 10/05/2024

Method: Written representations

Decision: Appeal Dismissed

Date Determined: 10/05/2024

Inspector: A Tucker BA (Hons) IHBC)

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The appeal site lies to the rear of 9 Eldon Square, a Grade II Listed Building. This part of the site currently comprises a single storey garage building. The site is within the Eldon Square Conservation Area.

1.2 Application 220123/FUL was refused for three reasons, summarised as:

1. Visually dominant, unsympathetic development that would fail to maintain or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, setting of Listed Buildings and street scene
2. Harm to occupiers of neighbouring properties due to overbearing impact
3. Absence of legal agreement to secure affordable housing.

1.3 Application 220124/LBC was refused for the following reason:

1. The proposals would fail to maintain or enhance the character of the Listed building.

1.4 The applicant appealed against both decisions to the Planning Inspectorate.

1.5 In relation to application 220123/FUL and during the course of the appeal, a S106 unilateral undertaking was submitted to secure an affordable housing contribution.

2 SUMMARY OF DECISION

2.1 The Inspector considered the appeals together and considered the main issues to be:

- The effect of the proposal on the significance of the Listed Building and whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Eldon Square Conservation Area
- The effect of the proposal upon the living conditions of the dwellings to the east with particular regard to outlook

2.2 The Inspector acknowledged the differences between the front of the site comprising the listed building No.9 Eldon Square itself, and the rear of site comprising garages. The Inspector considered No.9 to enjoy a carefully planned and spacious setting in part due to mature landscape garden. In contrast, the Inspector considered the rear garage part of the site to contribute little to the significance of the listed building.

2.3 On the first main issue, the Inspector disagreed with the LPA's concerns that the proposal would result in a visually dominant and unsympathetic addition to the street scene and conservation area. Instead, the Inspector considered the design of the proposed dwelling to be acceptable and indicative of an outbuilding that might have been associated with No.9 Eldon Square. The Inspector considered the proposal to represent a visual enhancement over the appearance of the existing garages and concrete wall.

- 2.4 However, the Inspector, whilst acknowledging the amount of garden that would be retained for the listed building, raised concerns about the separation of the plot. Specifically, that the proposal would strip the listed building of its rear access and the ability of its occupants to park cars off the road. Whilst acknowledging that this was not raised as a concern by the LPA or the Highway Authority, the Inspector considered that given the restricted nature of parking in the area, this matter carries considerable weight particularly given increased use of electric cars and public charging facilities. On this point the Inspector concluded that removal of the parking area would lessen the building's potential to sustain its own future and its potential to be reinstated as a single dwelling. As such, the Inspector considered the proposal to constitute a failure to protect the historic environment and long-term conservation of the listed building.
- 2.5 The Inspector acknowledged visual improvements to the street scene, benefits from construction process and potential of off-site provision of affordable housing. However, the Inspector considered these benefits to have modest weight that did not outweigh the harm identified. In overall conclusion on this point, the Inspector considered the proposal would have a harmful impact on the long term conservation of the listed building and its special interest, in conflict with Policies CC7, EN1, EN3 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and the requirements of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act.
- 2.6 Moving on to the second issue and in respect of impact on neighbour amenity, the Inspector agreed that due to the depth of the proposal and location immediately adjacent No.2 Eldon Terrace, the proposal would result in the occupiers of this property feeling 'hemmed in' with outlook restricted. The Inspector concluded on this point that the proposal would result in unacceptable living conditions of neighbouring property, in conflict with Policies CC8 and H11 of the Reading Borough Council Local Plan 2019.
- 2.7 In respect of affordable housing matters, whilst the Inspector acknowledged an obligation was provided to address this matter during the appeal, it was not considered further due to the concerns raised.
- 2.8 The Inspector dismissed both appeals.

Assistant Director for Planning, Transport & Public Protection comments

This is a pleasing and clear-cut appeal decision, with the Inspector endorsing the overall conclusion reached by Officers and also identifying a concern that reducing amenities for the existing listed building could undermine its value as a single dwelling and thus its long term conservation.

Case officer: Ethne Humphreys