

Appeal No: APP/E0345/W/18/3216027 and APP/E0345/Y/18/3216026

Planning Ref: 172205/FUL and 172206/LBC

Site: 18 Russell Street, Reading

Proposal: Erection of two-storey rear extension to accommodate a 1 bedroom flat

Decision level: Delegated decision on 23/05/18

Method: Written Representations

Decision: Appeals Dismissed

Date Determined: 19 December 2019

Inspector: Patrick Whelan

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The appeal site comprises a mid-terrace Grade II listed building, located on the western side of Russell Street. It serves 4 one-bed flats over basement, ground, first and second floor levels. The site is located within the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area.
- 1.2 Two applications were received, an application for Full Planning Permission and associated application for Listed Building Consent. In May 2018 both applications were refused at officer level for the following reasons:

172205/FUL

1. The proposed development, due to its detailed design and appearance, would result in an incongruous and unsympathetic rear extension failing to integrate well with the host building and detrimental to the integrity and setting of the listed building within the conservation area. The development would fail to preserve or enhance the special architectural character and appearance of these heritage assets. This would be contrary to Policies CS7 (Design and the Public Realm) and CS33 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) of the Core Strategy 2008 (altered 2015), Policy DM9 (House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation) of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015) and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.
2. The proposed development, due to its proximity, depth and height, is considered to result in a detrimental impact to the living environment of both the ground and first floor flats of the existing building in terms of dominance and overbearing impact. This would be contrary to Policy DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity) of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015), the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance - A Design Guide to House Extensions (2003) and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.
3. The proposed development is considered to provide an unacceptable standard of accommodation due to its unsatisfactory internal space, resulting in a cramped appearance, which, combined with poor light levels will adversely impact upon the level of amenity and quality of living accommodation which future occupants should reasonably expect to enjoy. This would be contrary to Policy DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity) of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015) and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.
4. In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure an acceptable contribution towards the provision of Affordable Housing, the proposal fails to contribute adequately to the housing needs of Reading Borough, contrary to Policy DM6 (Affordable Housing) of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015) and the Council's Adopted Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2013.

1. The proposed development, due to its detailed design and appearance, would result in an incongruous and unsympathetic rear extension failing to integrate well with the host building and detrimental to the integrity and setting of the listed building within the conservation area. The development would fail to preserve or enhance the special architectural character and appearance of these heritage assets. This would be contrary to Policy CS33 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) of the Core Strategy 2008 (altered 2015) and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

2 SUMMARY OF DECISION

2.1 The Inspector accepted that the main issues of the appeal were:

- Whether the proposal would preserve the grade II listed building and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it processes;
- Whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area;
- Whether the proposal would harm the living conditions of surrounding occupiers with regard to outlook;
- Whether the proposal would provide acceptable living conditions for future occupiers in terms of the provision of internal living space and light; and,
- Whether the proposal would contribute to affordable housing in accordance with local and national planning policy

2.2 With regard to the special interest of the listed building, the Inspector considered this to be primarily associated with its origin as an early to mid C19 terrace of houses with surviving historic forms of fabric, together with the architectural character of the group.

2.3 In terms of the impact on the listed building, the Inspector considered that the proposed extension would be disproportionately wide and deep in relation to the rear elevation.

2.4 Further to the above, and with regard to special features, the Inspector considered that the extension would unacceptably mask the semi-circular stair window, thereby diminishing an attractive feature on the rear elevation and lessening its architectural integrity. Overall, the Inspector considered the extension to unbalance the rear elevation and in particular have a harmful effect to the architectural language of the building, intrinsic to its significance and thereby failing to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the building.

2.4 In terms of the impact on the Conservation Area, the Inspector considered that, whilst views of the rear would be limited, that as the building itself contributes significantly to the overall architectural and historic interest of the Conservation Area, it is, therefore, also an important feature of the Conservation Area. Further to this, the Inspector considered that the extension would not preserve or enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area.

2.5 In terms of the living conditions of surrounding occupiers, the Inspector considered that due to the depth and height of the proposed extension, and with no alternative outlook available, this would severely reduce the outlook of the occupiers of the ground floor flat. The Inspector considered this to be the same unacceptable impact to the first floor flat. No harm was considered to arise to the basement flat.

2.6 The Inspector therefore concluded that the proposals would conflict with policy aimed to protect the living conditions of surrounding occupiers.

- 2.7 In terms of the living conditions of future occupiers, the Inspector considered that, whilst there would be sufficient daylight and sunlight serving the flat, the gross internal floor area would be so small and insufficient that it would result in a significant detrimental impact on the living environment of future occupiers.
- 2.8 The Inspector therefore concluded that “the proposals would provide unacceptable living conditions for future occupiers in terms of the provision of internal space”...contrary to policy.
- 2.9 In terms of affordable housing, the Inspector noted the unilateral undertaking submitted during the course of the appeal, which would secure £8.000 towards affordable housing. The Inspector was satisfied that whilst the Framework indicates that affordable housing should be sought for residential development that are not major developments, the Council’s evidence demonstrates that there is a need for a contribution on such schemes in Reading. More, that there was no evidence that the contribution would prevent this development. Further to this, although the appeal was ultimately dismissed, the Inspector was satisfied that the financial contribution would meet the necessary tests (para 56 of the Framework and Regulation 12 of the Community Infrastructure Regulations) and would contribute to affordable housing in accordance with local and national planning policy.
- 2.10 The Inspector recognised the benefits of the scheme (an additional dwelling would contribute to the supply of affordable housing and its associated economic benefits ie construction). However, the Inspector concluded that the benefits provided would not outweigh the harm to the listed building, coupled with the harm to the living conditions of surrounding and future occupiers.
- 2.11 In overall terms the Inspector found that the harmful impacts of the scheme outweighed the benefits.

Head of Planning, Development & Regulatory Services Comment:

This appeal decision is very welcome given the useful comments made by the Planning Inspector about preserving heritage in the Russell Street and Castle Hill Conservation Area at this time when this Conservation Area has been reappraised with the proposal to extend the boundary out to consultation.

Case officer: Ethne Humphreys