

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Target Date: Originally

10/01/2020, but an extension of time for the determination of the application was agreed until 13/02/2020

Application No: 191832/FUL
Address: 689/691 Oxford Road, Reading, RG30 1HP
Ward: Norcot
Case Officer: James Schofield
Proposal: Proposed alterations to remove Hip and form Gable roof including 3 rear dormers and 3 front velux roof lights (amended description) .

1. SITE DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

The proposed development site relates to two, now joined, circa 1890s two storey buildings. The proposed site is located at the corner of Craig Avenue, Grovelands Road and Oxford Road where the decreasing elevations of Craig Avenue and Grovelands Road ensue the proposed site is particularly prominent. 689/691 are set back and down from 675-687 Oxford Road to which they are visually subordinate. These buildings are characterised by detailed decorative brickwork, particularly on and around chimneys, windows, doorways and along the ridgeline. 689/691 have a hipped roof which serves to visually cap and taper-off the roofline across these related buildings. 691 Oxford Road has suffered from an unsympathetic front and side extension featuring large barred windows and a flat roof to accommodate an entrance/foyer.

The building is not listed, nor located within a conservation area. The site is however within an air quality management area.

2. PROPOSAL

The proposed works seek to make various single-storey rear extension, roof alterations to the building. Most substantially, the proposal involves the removal of the hipped roof in favour of gable-ended roof (two chimneys will also be removed to facilitate these works), three rear roofslope dormers and three front roofslope Velux roof lights. The proposals would create two additional bedrooms and a bathroom within the property (which is already in residential use - see relevant history below). To clarify, no further separate planning units are proposed as part of this application.

During the course of the application the originally proposed single rear dormer was omitted and a revised proposal incorporating three separate rear dormer additions were submitted.

The proposed plans also reference a ground floor rear extension; this does not form part of this proposal, for it was approved as part of the 2019 planning permission at the site (see relevant history below). At the time of the officer site visit, this extension had not been built and the pre-existing rear addition remained in place.

3. CONSULTEES

Neighbours

A site notice was displayed November 27th, 2019 receiving no comments in relation to the application. 6 nearby occupiers were also formally consulted by letter. Again, no responses have been received.

4. PLANS/DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED

The agent supplied the following:

Drawing No: 01 - Existing Plans & Elevation

Drawing No: 04 Rev B - Proposed Loft Conversion (superseded during the application)

Received on 14 November 2019

Drawing No: 04 Rev C - Proposed Loft Conversion

Received on 26 January 2020

5. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

LPA ref: 190413

Description: Change of use from D1 at ground floor and C3 flat at first floor, to part ground floor for B1 office and C3 residential for the remainder of the building.

Decision: Permitted 3/6/2019

6. EQUALITY ACT 2010

In determining this application, the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore, 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. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019):

CC7: Design and the Public Realm

CC8: Safeguarding Amenity

EN15: Air Quality

TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy

Supplementary Planning Guidance:

A Design Guide to House Extensions

8. APPRAISAL

8.1 Principle of development

The application seeks planning permission to alter the roof plan to provide two additional bedrooms and a further bathroom to the property. This would improve the standard of accommodation for current and future occupiers.. Such works are supported in principle by policies of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) subject to criteria which ensure both the effects of the development are not harmful and the development contributes appropriately to the integrity of the context of the Borough. This will be considered in more detail in the following sections.

8.2 Character and Development in the Historic Context

Policy CC7 of the Local Plan states that, development must be of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area in Reading in which it is located and makes a positive contribution to the character and continuity of its context. The policy seeks to ensure development creates and or reinforces local character and distinctiveness while enhancing the historic environment of the Borough.

The original proposed development sought the removal of the existing hipped roof in favour of installing; a gable ended roof; a single large dormer with a flat roof running the entire length of the building to the rear; and completely removing the existing characteristic chimneys. After positive and proactive discussions took place with the agent, amended plans were submitted which reduced the scale of the dormers to three separate smaller dormers spaced asymmetrically in the roof plan. However, neither the characteristic chimneys or the hipped roof is proposed to be retained. This combines with the asymmetric layout of the proposed dormers to result in a proposal which fails to exhibit a high design quality and fails to maintain or enhance the character and appearance of the building or the area of Reading in which the building is located. Furthermore, it is considered the visual result of losing the chimneys and introducing an asymmetrical dormer layout (with the middle dormer - serving a staircore - being particularly out of scale with the other two dormers, and in itself being of poor quality design dominating the roofscape at this point) would harm the overall sense of continuity in design which currently ties the development site to 675-687 Oxford Road as observed from Craig Avenue and Grovelands Road. In short, this is a visually prominent location and the proposed additions would not respond positively to the local context. Because the proposal harms rather than creates or reinforces a positive sense of local character and distinctiveness, the proposed development does not to accord with policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Furthermore, although fully acknowledged not to be a typical house, the principles detailed within the Design Guide to House Extensions SPD is considered to be applicable in

this instance. In relation to the proposed dormers, the following points are considered particularly pertinent in this case:

- Dormer windows should be set within the roof slope and be in proportion with the scale of the rest of the house in terms of overall size and window shape
- It is important that dormers and rooflights reflect the pattern of existing window openings

In this regard, the scale of the central dormer in particular is not considered to be in proportion with the rest of the house. Although the proposals appear to attempt to align with the windows below, this has not been achieved in all three instances (either off-set in part or a contrasting width).

In respect of the three front rooflights proposed, no design concerns are raised in relation to this element of the proposals.

8.3 Amenity

Policy CC8 requires development to refrain from causing a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or creating unacceptable living conditions for residents.

The proposed roof alterations, including new fenestration, would not introduce any further detrimental views into neighbouring gardens, obstruct sunlight or introduce development which would be overbearing for neighbours at levels which would constitute the refusal of the application. The proposal is considered to accord with Policy CC8.

8.4 Other matters

The proposals do not introduce any new planning units; instead two additional bedrooms within an existing property are proposed. As such, no adverse transport or air quality impacts are envisaged.

The provision of enlarged and improved residential accommodation within the Borough is generally welcomed. However, in this instance, this planning benefit of providing two additional bedrooms (thereby improving the living environment of existing and future occupiers) is not considered to outweigh the harmful design impacts detailed above.

9. CONCLUSION

Whilst acknowledging that the proposals would provide an improved living environment for current/future occupiers, when applying a critical planning balance, this benefit is not considered to outweigh the harmful design based impacts identified. In light of the above assessment the proposal is considered to fail to meet the requirements of the development plan and therefore refusing planning permission is recommended.

10. RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE planning permission.

The proposed roof level alterations and proposed rear dormers, owing to their scale, form and detailed design, would be harmful to the character of the host building and wider streetscene, contrary to Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

APPENDIX

Site Photos as of the 30th of January 2020.





Classification: OFFICIAL



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