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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 August 2026

by **S Sharp BSc(Hons) BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 August 2026

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### Appeal Ref: 6005740

### 18 Church Road, Caversham, Reading RG4 7AD

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs Williams against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
  - The application reference is PL/25/1597.
  - The development proposed is the construction of a 1.5-storey side extension and a double-storey rear extension, and the removal of a masonry upstand/short brick wall and replacing it with glass guarding and the regrading of existing garden steps.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the construction of a 1.5-storey side extension and a double-storey rear extension, and the removal of a masonry upstand/short brick wall and replacing it with glass guarding and the regrading of existing garden steps, at 18 Church Road, Caversham, Reading RG4 7AD in accordance with the terms of the application, reference PL/25/1597, subject to the conditions set out in the attached schedule.

### Preliminary Matters

2. I have made a minor amendment to the description of the development taken from the application form in the interests of clarity. The elements describing the proposed development remain unaltered.
3. During the course of the appeal the revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published. There are no substantive changes relevant to the appeal before me and therefore no interested parties would be prejudiced by my consideration of the 2026 version of the Framework. References hereafter are to the August 2026 version.

### Main Issues

4. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:
  - the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the St. Peter's Conservation Area; and,
  - protected species, specifically bats.

### Reasons

#### *Character and appearance*

5. The appeal site (the site) lies within the St. Peter's Conservation Area (CA). It comprises of a detached dwelling within a row of other dwellings on the north side

of the River Thames. The Council's Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) identifies the common two-storey built form, coherent use of materials, and the treed setting provided by the views of them from the Thames Promenade, as values that contribute to the area's character and appearance and the CA's significance.

6. The host dwelling is not identified in the CAA as being a building of townscape merit. Overall, it is unobtrusive, and its form, siting and soft landscaped grounds open to the River Thames are complementary to the character and appearance of the CA. The timbered projecting gable at the rear of the dwelling is redolent of the building's overall Arts and Crafts style, albeit the position and massing of other dwellings within the row results in them being noticeably more prominent in the views from the Thames Promenade.
7. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990) (LBCA) requires that, in my decision, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.
8. The proposed side extension would be sympathetically accommodated within an extension to the existing roof, replicating the pitch, plain clay tiles, red facing brick, hipped gable, ridge and eaves heights. The Arts and Crafts character and appearance of the host dwelling would be retained, and the bulk and massing reduced significantly by the design elements proposed.
9. The 2-storey rear extension, incorporating the first-floor gabled projection and wider ground floor, would deviate from the existing dwelling's style due to the form, extent of glazing and facing steel proposed. It would also mask some of the original Arts and Crafts detailing such as the timbered rear gable. However, its effect on the character and appearance of the area would be tempered significantly by the design's characteristics. Most of the volume would be restricted to the ground floor, and the extent of glazing would reduce the visual mass and bulk.
10. The relatively restricted width of the site would also mean that the extent of projection of both floors would not be readily apparent. Views of it, including from the Thames Promenade, would be largely restricted to its rear elevation rather than the sides. Furthermore, it would be no nearer to the River Thames, nor as visually dominant as the neighbouring dwelling, Mulberry House.
11. I reach a similar finding when assessing the proposed development's effect relative to existing dwellings towards Caversham Bridge. Specifically, the extended dwelling at the site would not be as visually prominent as the conservatory at the property labelled as No 3 on the submitted existing block plan, the rendered main building at that property, or the rendered rear elevation of 18A Church Road.
12. As such, the extended dwelling at the site would remain unobtrusive, without appearing as having excessive mass and bulk. The loss of some of the original architectural detail would be minor in effect. Overall, it would not constitute an incongruous and over dominant development and the character and appearance of the host dwelling, and the CA would be preserved. I find that there would be no harm to the significance of this designated heritage asset.
13. For these reasons, the proposed development would accord with policies H9, CC7, EN1 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) (RBLP). These

policies seek, amongst other things, to ensure that the design of developments is informed by and responds to context, reinforcing local character and preserving the historic environment. Policy EN3 of the RBLP states that development proposals within conservation areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. There is a degree of tension with this policy as the proposal's preserving of the character and appearance of the CA is a neutral rather than positive effect.

14. However, I find that the lack of conflict with the other RBLP policies means that there is not conflict overall with the development plan in relation to this matter. In reaching this finding I have had regard to policies HE4, HE5 and HE6 of the Framework and find that policies EN3 and EN6 of the RBLP are consistent with them.

#### *Protected species*

15. From the evidence before me, the protected species that could be affected by the development proposed are bats. A 2022 survey, as part of a Bat Risk Assessment (BRA) completed by a suitably qualified and licenced ecologist on behalf of the appellant, found evidence of a single bat dropping within the host dwelling's roof area. The BRA recommended three emergence or pre-dawn re-entry surveys be undertaken because of the potential for bat roosts.
16. A subsequent Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PBRA) in September 2024 found no direct evidence of bats roosting within the dwelling and nor did two subsequent emergence surveys completed on 1st and 29th May 2025. A further Emergence Survey Report (ESR) detailed the findings from these surveys.
17. It is clear from the evidence before me that a 3<sup>rd</sup> emergence survey has not been completed. However, because of the lack of bats reported in the 2024 PBRA and 2025 ESR respectively, I find that two emergence surveys are proportionate in this instance, especially given that the more recent surveys do not indicate that a roost is present. Furthermore, bats are afforded protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017). As such, if bats are discovered during the construction phase, protection would still apply.
18. The proposed development includes provisions for bat roosts as per the recommendations of the PBRA and ESR. Such a provision can be secured by an appropriately worded condition, and as such I am satisfied that appropriate protection and mitigation has been provided.
19. Therefore, I find that the proposed development would not adversely affect protected species, specifically bats, and consequently it would accord with the provisions of policy EN12 of the RBLP. This policy seeks to protect and, wherever possible, enhance features of biodiversity interest on and adjacent to the application site, incorporating and integrating them into development proposals wherever practicable. This policy has consistency with policy N2 of the Framework in relation to this matter.

## **Other Matters**

### *Listed buildings*

20. The map within the CAA identifies that the site is within the wider setting of several listed buildings on Church Road. These are No 20 (The Rectory) including Garden Walls, Buckside, Buckside Cottage, and various buildings at Caversham Court.
21. Section 66 of the LBCA requires that I have had special regard to the desirability of preserving these buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess. The setting of the Thames and Church Road contribute to the significance of all of these listed buildings.
22. The modest scale of the proposed development and presence of other undesignated buildings of prominence, such as Mulberry House, within the views of the listed buildings from the Thames Promenade and Church Road, mean that the setting of these buildings will be preserved. There will be no harm to their significance. The proposal would accord with policy EN1 of the RBLP which is consistent with policies HE4, HE5 and HE6 of the Framework.

### *Tree replanting/replacement*

23. An olive tree would need to be moved because of the proposed development. Whilst this tree does not contribute to the treed character of the CA, its replanting or replacement planting would be necessary to secure a balance between the natural and built environment. This can be secured by a condition, and, as result, the development would accord with policy EN12 of the RBLP's criterion that new tree planting should be provided. This policy has consistency with policy N2 of the Framework in relation to this matter.

### *Other material considerations*

24. In reaching my findings on the effects of the proposed development to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the CA, I have had regard to the provisions of the Council's Design Guide to House Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (2021). This did not affect my findings on this matter and my assessment of the proposed development against the development plan and duties within the LBCA.

## **Conditions**

25. In addition to the standard time condition, I have imposed a condition requiring that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans, for the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of certainty.
26. I have also imposed a condition requiring the planting of a tree to compensate for the loss of the olive tree in its current location, or to secure its replanting. This has amended wording to that suggested by the Council as the general landscaping requirements included within their wording would go beyond the extent of what is necessary and reasonable.
27. A condition has also been imposed, as suggested by the Council, in relation to flood mitigation given the location of the site within an area of high probability of river flooding. A condition is also required to secure the provision of a bat box,

brick or tile within the proposed development for the reasons I have already given in this decision.

28. There are some details of facing materials included on the plans. The detail has been sufficient for me to determine that the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the CA would be preserved. Nevertheless, for clarity, further details are necessary and I have imposed a condition accordingly.
29. The Council has suggested a condition limiting the use of the roof area of the proposed rear extension. This roof would afford some limited views of neighbouring gardens. However, without further alterations, the roof would only be accessible by climbing out of one of the first-floor windows or over the glazed balustrading of a Juliet balcony. As such, the probability of accessing the roof is unlikely and it would be unreasonable to impose such a condition.
30. The Council have also suggested a condition restricting permitted development rights for alterations to the host dwelling other than those shown on the proposed plans. The suggested reason is in the interests of the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers, specifically in relation to their privacy. Given the limited opportunities for overlooking that I observed at the site, due to the positioning and elevational treatments of neighbouring properties and the existing boundary screening and vegetation, I find that such a condition is neither necessary nor reasonable.

### **Conclusion**

31. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed.

*S Sharp*

INSPECTOR

### **Schedule of Conditions**

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawing nos 283.007A Proposed Ground Floor Plan, 283.008 Proposed First Floor Plan, 283.009A Proposed Lower Ground Floor and Roof Plans, 283.010B Proposed Elevations 1 of 2, 283.011C Proposed Elevations 2 of 2, 283.02.019A Proposed Block Plan.
- 3) No development shall commence above foundation level until a schedule of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out and thereafter maintained in accordance with the details approved.
- 4) Prior to first occupation of the development hereby permitted, details of biodiversity enhancements, to include a minimum of one bat box, brick or tile built into the walls of the new extensions shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The biodiversity enhancements shall be installed as approved and retained thereafter for the lifetime of the development.
- 5) Prior to first occupation of the development hereby permitted, all flood mitigation and protection measures, as contained within the Flood Risk Assessment dated September 2025, shall be implemented in full and maintained in perpetuity for the lifetime of the development.
- 6) Prior to first occupation of the development hereby permitted a tree shall be planted in accordance with a specification previously submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The specification shall include the size, species, and position of the tree, and how it will be planted and protected. If the tree, within a period of 5 years from the date of planting, dies, is removed or becomes seriously damaged or diseased, it shall be replaced in the next planting season with a tree to the approved specification.