
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 June 2017

by H Porter BA(Hons) PGDip IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 30 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/D0121/W/17/3171738

Land on western side of Coombe Road, Weston-super-Mare BS23 2QP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr D McCallion & Ms J Moorby against the decision of North Somerset Council.
 - The application Ref 16/P/2614/F, dated 21 October 2016, was refused by notice dated 22 February 2017.
 - The development proposed is single storey first floor extension above a block of 4 garages. Conversion of two of the garages and retention of the other two as parking for the dwelling that is being created.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Boulevard/Montpelier Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The Boulevard/Montpelier Conservation Area (the conservation area) comprises an attractive Victorian residential enclave on the hillside overlooking Weston-super-Mare. Paragraph 132 of the Framework makes clear that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, which include conservation areas¹.
4. Coombe Road is a curving, tree-lined street within the heart of the conservation area. The two sides of the street have a different character and appearance, in part dictated by the imposing semi-detached villas on its eastern side. The western side, where the appeal site is located, is more readily defined by later 20th century detached dwellings, set back into the steep hillside that climbs up to the rear ranges of the Bristol Road Lower Houses behind. These later dwellings, though having different architectural style and forms, share a broadly common building line and material palette of rendered elevations and clay tiled roofs.
5. The back of pavement along the west side of Coombe Road has an even stronger line created by the sheer stone boundary walls with occasional garage

¹ Annex 2: Glossary, National Planning Policy Framework

- openings, commonly single-storey. The broadly consistent material palette, building line and gradual increase in scale in response to the local topography combine to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area as a whole.
6. The appeal site itself is situated on the outer curve of Coombe Road. The block of four single-storey garages is architecturally unremarkable, and forms part of the unassuming ancillary structures that create the backcloth on the west side of Coombe Road. The use of natural rubble stone also assists in their assimilation into the wider street scene. At single-storey height, they also provide legibility of the land sloping up to their rear.
 7. The appeal proposal seeks to add a timber and aluminium-clad roof storey, over the existing garage block to facilitate the creation of a two-bedroomed dwelling. Two of the garage doors on the front elevation would be replaced with a window and front door set within panels of aluminium cladding.
 8. As a residential dwelling, the appeal scheme would stand well forward of the established building line that characterises the other houses on west side of Coombe Road. The domestic nature of the proposal would be accentuated by the introduction of accommodation at first floor level as well as the window and front door on the building's ground floor. While the overall storey height may not be excessive, overall the proposal would stand out as uncharacteristic and at odds with the ancillary nature of garages and parking areas that otherwise occupy the back edge of the pavement on same side of Coombe Road.
 9. In terms of its design, except on a mews or other intimate secondary route, a single contemporary 'coach house' would appear starkly out of place. While the design is contemporary, which in itself is not objectionable, it does not aid the assimilation of the scheme into its surroundings. Moreover, the use of aluminium and timber cladding, in a context where stone and render underpin the prevalent material palette, would further emphasise the proposal as being atypical and add emphasis to its disparity within the local context.
 10. The impact of the proposal would be particularly noticeable in views along Coombe Road, thereby undermining the character and quality of the Coombe Road street scene. Irrespective of the site's prominence in the wider context, through eroding the established building line, and failing to respond positively to the surroundings in terms of design and materials, the proposal would still result in harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area as a whole. Given the site's location and the scale of development proposed, I would quantify the extent of the harm to the conservation area as a whole as being less than substantial when considered in the context of paragraphs 133 and 134 of the Framework. However, any harm, even if it is less than substantial, still requires clear and convincing justification and must be attributed considerable importance and weight.
 11. The proposal would deliver one unit of accommodation within easy reach of the facilities and services of Weston-super-Mare. Though, in the broad scheme of things, a very modest contribution to boosting the supply of housing, it still weighs modestly in favour of the proposals and can also be considered, in the context of paragraph 134 of the Framework, as a public benefit. That said, even with the use of quality materials, the wider public benefits are insufficient to outweigh the harm the development would cause to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

12. Accordingly, the proposed development would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. The proposal would therefore fail to accord with Policy CS5 and CS12 of the North Somerset Core Strategy, adopted January 2017 (The CS) as well as Policies DM3, DM32 and DM39 of the North Somerset Sites and Policies Plan (Part 1), adopted July 2016 (the SPP) which seek to ensure proposals preserve and enhance the character and appearance of a conservation area, and that the conversion of buildings does not have a harmful effect on the character of the local area, and to achieve high quality buildings and places. Moreover, the appeal scheme would be contrary to the principles of the Framework insofar as they seek to ensure high quality design that takes account of the different roles and character of different areas, and that great weight is given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset.

Other matter

13. I note the comments made in relation to the Council's handling of the original application. However, these matters sit outside the consideration of the planning merits of the proposal and have therefore had very little bearing on my overall decision.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons I have set out above, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

H Porter

INSPECTOR