
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 December 2017

by H Porter BA(Hons) PGDip IHBC

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

Decision date: 12 January 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/F0114/W/17/3179154

42 Gainsborough Road, Keynsham BS31 1LS

- 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 Messrs Hancock Fraying and Maddison against the decision of Bath & North East Somerset Council.
 - The application Ref 17/01539/FUL, dated 2 September 2016, was refused by notice dated 16 June 2017.
 - The development proposed is construction of two self-contained flats adjacent to 42/44 Gainsborough Road, Keynsham, Bristol BS31 1LS.
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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 area.

Reasons

3. The area in the vicinity of the appeal site is characterised by late 20th century residential development, defined by paired two-storey flats and semi-detached houses, which present a staggered and regularly spaced frontage. Despite some variety in architectural style, development tends to be grouped by a common design approach, with balanced proportions, a symmetrical pattern of fenestration, roof form and overall width. The overall symmetry, as well as the regular plot rhythm and layout, reflects the careful spatial planning of the wider suburb. Gaps between pairs and groups of dwellings also give glimpsed views to greenery and planting within private rear gardens, contributing to the overall sense of a spacious suburban environment.
4. The appeal concerns a relatively small, rectangular portion of flat garden land sandwiched between Numbers 42/44 and Number 46 Gainsborough Road, close to the end of the cul-de-sac. The absence of development on the site gives a view to the mature planting beyond it and off-sets the density of built form. Nos 42/44 form one half of a pair of flat units at the end of a group of identical blocks, each characterised by their balance, symmetry and consistent detailing.
5. The dimensions and shape of the appeal site are constrained by the existing properties around it. Although the proposal is intended to mimic the design of existing development, the width of the unit would be noticeably narrower and longer. It would therefore fail to reflect the form and pattern of the flat blocks

that define the local context and, even with the provision of a garden to the front and rear, the proposal would appear cramped and conspicuously out of place. The proposal would be set down and back slightly from the front building line in order to satisfy design guidance relating to residential extensions. The appeal scheme, however, is not an extension but two self-contained units. Even with the use of matching materials, the proposal would result in the neighbouring paired flat blocks having a pronounced asymmetric, and so unbalanced, appearance.

6. While the semi-detached dwellings on the opposite side of Gainsborough Road have dormers, these houses are in general harmony with each other and reflect the balanced proportions that characterise the area. There are no other properties within the Road that have similar dormers to those proposed. As such, I consider that the dormer, particularly on the front elevation, would draw the eye and represent an incongruous feature within the overall street scene.
7. Furthermore, the existing space that separates Nos 42/44 provides an open aspect between the neighbouring properties and contributes positively to a wider sense of a spacious urban layout. The appeal proposal would reduce this open aspect. While views to the planting to the rear of the site could be glimpsed through the very narrow gap proposed, and notwithstanding that there are examples of some narrow gaps locally, the site's contribution to the spaciousness and careful planning of the wider area would be markedly diminished.
8. Consequently, I conclude that the proposal would cause material harm to the character and appearance of the area. As such, the scheme would be contrary to Policy CP6 of the Bath and North East Somerset Core Strategy, July 2014 insofar as it seeks to ensure new development is of high quality, which reinforces and contributes to its specific local context. There would also be conflict with Policy D1, D2, D3, D5 and D7 of the Bath and North East Somerset Placemaking Plan District-wide Strategy and Policies, September 2017, which require, amongst other things, development to respond to the characteristics of the settlement, respond positively to the site context, including layout and spacing, be well detailed, designed to relate positively to the street, and to reflect the form, pattern and grain of existing development.

Planning balance

9. The proposal would contribute two additional dwellings, which would make a small but nonetheless beneficial contribution towards the supply of housing. The proposed self-contained flats would also contribute to the mix of housing types available in a location where there would be options to travel without reliance on private cars and with a range of facilities and services within easy reach. A lack of harm in terms of highway safety, parking, or in respect of neighbours' living conditions are all neutral factors that do not weigh in the overall planning balance. On the other hand, the proposal would do material harm to the character and appearance of the area. The totality of the modest benefits are therefore not sufficient to outweigh such harm.

Other matters

10. The appellant points out that planning permission has been granted for two-storey extensions locally. However, I have not been made aware of the considerations that were taken into account when they were permitted.

Moreover, the two examples illustrated at Appendix 2, occupy large corner plots, and appear concern extensions to semi-detached dwellings, not the construction of self-contained flats. The examples given do not therefore justify the proposal before me, which, in any event, has been considered on its own merits.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

H Porter

INSEPECTOR