
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 January 2018

by D Boffin BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI Dip Bldg Cons (RICS) IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 January 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/Z0116/D/17/3181429

9 Bowerleaze, Sea Mills, Bristol BS9 2HJ

- 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 Steve Brown against the decision of Bristol City Council.
 - The application Ref 17/02592/H, dated 10 May 2017, was refused by notice dated 13 July 2017.
 - The development proposed is a first floor side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Sea Mills Conservation Area (SMCA).

Reasons

3. The appeal site is cited as being located in character area 2c, The Dorlonco Houses, of the Sea Mills Character Appraisal and Management Proposals document (CAMP). From the details available to me I consider that the significance of SMCA is largely drawn from its evidential and aesthetic value as a planned garden suburb. The elements that contribute to that significance include the simple design of the houses, the extent of green spaces, and the repetition of forms and spaces that gives SMCA a powerful and harmonious uniformity. The CAMP states that the meticulous planning of the Sea Mills Garden Suburb makes it particularly sensitive to physical alterations.
4. This part of SMCA is characterised by mainly semi-detached houses set in generous plots with trees and hedges within the garden areas that contribute a sense of spaciousness to the area. I note that a number of dwellings, including the host building, in the immediate vicinity of the site have been extended and that landscaping and boundary treatments restrict some views between the dwellings.
5. Nevertheless, few of those extensions include a first floor extension at the side. Moreover, even though the existing extensions have eroded the uniformity of the dwellings' plan forms the overriding characteristics are the regular spaces between dwellings and the symmetry of the semi-detached dwellings. The CAMP states that a weakness of this part of SMCA is extensions to the houses and threats to it are new extensions and loss of glimpses into gardens through extensions.

6. The proposal would comprise a first floor extension above the existing ground floor side extension. The materials, design and architectural details would be in keeping with that of the host building. The ridge of the extension's roof would be below that of the main roof and its footprint would be restricted in size. The proposal would also mask to some extent the existing 2-storey rear extension when viewed from Bowerleaze.
7. However, the proposal would visually infill part of the gap at first floor level between the dwellings. This existing gap is an important element of the streetscene as it contributes to and reinforces the regularity of the plot layout and the spacious character of this part of SMCA. Whilst some views between the dwellings would be retained the loss of part of the gap and views at first floor level would mean that the spaciousness and regularity of the plot layout would be appreciably eroded. Furthermore, even though the proposal would have a restricted footprint it would visibly extend to the side of the dwelling at first floor and roof level. Consequently, when viewed from Bowerleaze the symmetry of the pair of semi-detached houses would be noticeably eroded.
8. I acknowledge that the Council did not allege any harm in relation to highway safety, residential amenity and flood risk and that the extension would be built to the full energy conservation requirements of the Building Regulations. However, the lack of harm in these respects is a neutral consideration.
9. In conclusion, the uniformity and spaciousness of this part of SMCA would be appreciably eroded by the proposal and as a result the character and appearance of SMCA would not be preserved. In the language of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the harm the proposal would cause to the significance of SMCA would be less than substantial as the impact of the proposal would be relatively localised. Paragraph 134 of the Framework states that where a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. I have attached considerable importance and weight to the desirability of avoiding any such harmful effect in accordance with section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
10. I am conscious that the proposed extension is intended to improve the accommodation at the dwelling and to enable the family to stay within Sea Mills. To an extent that is a public, as well as a private, benefit. However, given the absence of evidence that the current accommodation is deficient to an extent likely to threaten the viability of the house as a dwelling this has modest weight. The public benefits attributable to the proposal would not outweigh the considerable importance and weight to be given to the harm to the heritage asset. As such, the proposal would not comply with paragraph 134 of the Framework.
11. It follows that the proposal would not comply with Policies BCS21 and BCS22 of the adopted Bristol Development Framework Core Strategy and Policies DM26, DM30 and DM31 of the Bristol Local Plan–Site Allocations and Development Management Policies. These policies together seek development that, amongst other things, contributes positively to an area's character and identity, would not be harmful to local character, would safeguard and conserve heritage assets and would respect the overall design and character of the host building and the broader street scene. It would also not comply with the guidance in the CAMP.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

D. Boffin

INSPECTOR