
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 June 2020

by M Allen BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 July 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Z0116/D/20/3253177

20 Westbury Lane, Coombe Dingle, Bristol BS9 2PE

- 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 Mrs Belinda Holbrook against the decision of Bristol City Council.
 - The application Ref 20/1304/H, dated 18 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 19 May 2020.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of existing garage. Proposed new double garage and home office with ancillary storage.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, bearing in mind the sites location within the Sea Mills Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The site lies within the Sea Mills Conservation Area. The Council's Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals document (the CAMP) identifies that the reason for the areas designation relates to its significance as a Garden Suburb. The area is a model of a planned Detached Garden Suburb and is identified as Bristol's finest example of planned post-World War II municipal housing. The defining elements of the area include the planned layout and interrelationship between buildings and spaces as well as the verdant and spacious character. Within the conservation area (the CA), the site lies within the North of Westbury Lane and Lux Furlong Character Area, which is identified as a "setting" area of the Garden Suburb, with a verdant, spacious and low-density character, with a high-quality townscape.
4. I observed the immediate vicinity within which the site is located to be characterised by residential development, and its significance derived, in part, from a distinct sense of spaciousness resulting from the siting of dwellings within generous plots, together with their positioning set back from roads.
5. The appeal site comprises a single dwelling and its associated garden area. To the rear garden is a detached garage building. Alongside the site is a Public Right of Way (PROW) which links Hartford Close, from which vehicular access to the site is gained, and Grove Avenue.

6. The existing garage is not generally visible from the public road to the front of the site, due to its positioning behind the dwelling together with mature landscaping to the frontage punctuated with only a narrow vehicular access point. This affords little view of the garden associated with the dwelling. However, I observed that when travelling along the adjacent PROW the existing garage was clearly visible, with the eaves and roof sitting above the level of the boundary fence. Given its relatively diminutive appearance however, it does not appear as an intrusive visual element.
7. In comparison, the proposed replacement garage and office would be a much larger building. It would be in the region of 2 metres (m) taller than the existing garage, as well as almost 20m in length, compared to the length of the existing, which is in the region of 9m. As a consequence of this, the proposal would be an extremely visually assertive structure in the views of those travelling along the PROW. Given its scale which follows from its combined height and form, it would significantly reduce the feeling of openness in the area, as experienced from the PROW. Furthermore, its location behind the frontage of dwellings would result in it appearing as an overly dominant standalone feature, rather than an ancillary structure associated with an existing dwelling.
8. This would reduce the sense of spaciousness that is an attractive and important feature of the area. It would also harmfully confuse the interrelationship between buildings in the locale, by introducing a building of substantial scale at a position behind a dwelling. The scale of the building would not present the appearance of being either an ancillary or subservient structure to the main house. I acknowledge that the Council accept that the height of the building, in isolation is acceptable. However, it is the height coupled with the form of the building which results in the specific harm that I have identified.
9. Accordingly, I find that the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area, which would include harming the significance of the conservation area as a designated heritage asset. Thus, the scheme would conflict with policies BSC21 and BCS22 of the Bristol Development Framework Core Strategy (adopted 2011), as well as policies DM26 and DM31 of the Bristol Local Plan – Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (adopted 2014). Together, and amongst other things, these policies seek to ensure development contributes positively to an areas character, that development safeguards the character of conservation areas, that development responds appropriately to historic assets and that development preserves those elements which contribute to the special character or appearance of conservation areas.
10. I have been referred to policy DM30 however the policy refers to extensions and alterations to existing buildings, rather than new buildings. As such, it does not appear to be directly relevant to the scheme before me. Even if it were, I find that it does not lend support to the proposal. Similarly, I have been referred to the Council's Supplementary Planning Document Number 2: A Guide for Designing House Alterations and Extensions (adopted 2005) (the SPD). As the scheme involves the provision of a new building, some distance from the main house, I do not consider the advice of this document to be relevant. This however does not diminish the conflict with policy that I have identified above.

11. In failing to preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area, I find that the scheme would result in less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset. As required by paragraph 196 of the Framework, I have had regard to any public benefits of the proposed development. However, any such benefit is not sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have identified.

Other Matters

12. The appellant refers to the possibility of a building, which could be constructed under permitted development, comprising a fallback position. However, it is accepted by the appellant that the building as proposed would not benefit from being permitted development. Moreover, the building would require substantial amendments in terms of its dimensions and siting in order to fall within permitted development allowances. As such, that would be a different proposal. This matter therefore has little bearing on my decision.
13. There would be no subdivision of the plot and given the generous proportions of the site, the loss of garden space would not be significant. These matters do not however outweigh the harm that I have identified.

Conclusion

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

Martin Allen

INSPECTOR