



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 19 July 2021 by B Phillips BSc MSc MRTPI

Decision by L McKay MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 September 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Z0116/D/21/3268964

Goldney Lodge, White Hart Steps, Clifton Wood, Bristol, BS8 4TQ

- 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 James Findlater against the decision of Bristol City Council.
 - The application Ref 20/03637/H, dated 1 September 2020, was refused by notice dated 26 November 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as the demolition of outhouses and construction of two storey side extension to give improved entrance, first floor bathroom and reinstatement of fourth bedroom (currently a bathroom). Construction of garden studio.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Preliminary Matters

3. The Government published on 20 July 2021 a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Accordingly, the parties have been provided with a further opportunity to make submissions in respect of the publication. The comments received have been taken into account within the appeal decision.
4. I saw on site that some work has commenced on site, including some footings and repairs. There is no evidence before me however that these relate specifically to the development proposed in this appeal. Therefore, I have considered the proposal on the basis that the development has not yet occurred.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and the Clifton and Hotwells Conservation Area (CA) and on the setting of nearby listed buildings.

Reasons for the Recommendation

6. Goldney Lodge is a 19th century detached Victorian property with a distinctive double gable roof form. It sits at the end of Bellevue Crescent, set back from that terrace, and is located prominently at the top of White Hart Steps, which

lead from Bellevue Crescent and Worlds End Lane down to Hotwell Road. The steps are Grade II Listed, as are the nearby properties Worlds End House and Avon Cottage.

7. The appeal site is located within the Cliftonwood Slopes Area of the CA, as set out in the adopted Clifton and Hotwells Character Appraisal and Management Proposals (2010) (Character Area 7). The Character Appraisal sets out that the area has a unique character influenced by local topography and geology, and is defined by *'close packed, rubble and stuccoed terraces'* and is *'a remarkably homogenous area for architectural style.'*
8. Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 require that special attention should be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas and preserving listed buildings and their setting or any features of architectural or historic interest which they possess. The Framework states that local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.
9. The existing dwelling is identified in the Character Appraisal as a character building. Its front elevation has a simple symmetrical appearance and it is finished in stone and render with a tiled roof. Whilst set apart physically and, unusually, in appearance from the neighbouring terrace, and despite currently being in a poor state of repair, it sits comfortably within and contributes positively to the historic traditional surroundings.
10. The Council has approved various contemporary extensions in the local area, and its Supplementary Planning Document 2 'A Guide for Designing House Alterations and Extensions' (2005) (SPD) sets out that extensions should generally respect but not necessarily mimic the style and appearance of the house. As such, suitable contemporary design could be accommodated in this sensitive historic environment.
11. The proposed side extension would use render at ground floor to match the existing dwelling. The zinc proposed at first floor is used elsewhere locally, therefore these materials would not, in isolation, appear out of place in the local context. Although set below the eaves of the existing dwelling, the proposed extension would be set back only slightly from the frontage and, due to its cantilevered design, it would appear as two distinctly different sections divided horizontally. This would create a horizontal emphasis at odds with the vertical emphasis of the existing dwelling and surrounding properties.
12. I recognise the appellant's intention to create a clear visual distinction between the existing dwelling and proposed extension. However, the boxy form, flat roof and slanted lower walls of the proposed extension would result in a starkly different design which would contrast harmfully with the traditional form and appearance of the existing dwelling. It would compete with the simple form of the existing property and therefore would not appear subservient to it. Consequently, due to the marked and unsympathetic contrasting form, the proposed side extension would be an incongruous and harmful addition which would harm the character and appearance of the existing dwelling.
13. The proposed side extension would be clearly visible from the footway and upper part of White Hart steps to the front of the property. The unsympathetic

and contrasting design would draw the eye and make it a prominent and discordant feature from these public viewpoints. Consequently, it would appear as an incongruous form of development which would diminish the contribution of the existing dwelling to the CA and detract from the predominantly traditional form and appearance of this part of the CA.

14. The appellant has drawn my attention to examples of contemporary design within the vicinity. The scheme at 1 Bellevue Cottages is smaller in scale than the proposal before me and is of appropriate form in relation to the design of the host property, and subservient to it. The roof extension at Oak Cottage is set back from the front elevation and is therefore less visually prominent than the appeal scheme would be. As such, the visual impact of these schemes and their effect on their host properties and the CA is materially different to that of the appeal proposal.
15. The example at Twenty Ten Bellevue Cottages is a recent dwelling of markedly contemporary design, very different to surrounding properties. However, as a detached property it is seen as an isolated element in the street scene, so does not directly compete or conflict with the traditional forms of development around it. The approved extension to that property would be of very similar design to the main dwelling, and as such is materially different to the scheme before me. These other examples do not therefore justify the harm I have identified.
16. White Hart Steps date from the early 19th century and are mostly surrounded by traditional vernacular buildings, with the exception of St Peters House, a large multi storey residential building at the bottom of the steps. When climbing the steps, the closely packed historic buildings are very much evident, particularly Avon Cottage and Worlds End House. These historic buildings form an important part of the setting of the steps and contribute greatly to their significance. Worlds End House derives significance from its age and architecture, and from its prominent siting at the end of Bellevue Crescent and the top of White Hart steps. Avon Cottage is sited part way down the steps, and its relationship with them forms an important part of its setting and significance.
17. The proposed side extension would be screened from view from the lower part of the steps by vegetation and walls and would not be easily visible from Avon Cottage. However, it would be clearly visible from Worlds End House and from the top of the steps. For the reasons set out above, the design of the proposed extension would make it a prominent and detracting feature, harmfully altering how the listed buildings are experienced in this key location where the steps meet the Crescent. As such, it would result in slight harm to the setting of White Hart steps and Worlds End House, and thereby have a slight, but nevertheless harmful impact on their significance.
18. Given the limited areas from which the proposed side extension would be visible, this would amount to less than substantial harm to the significance of the CA as a whole, and to the significance of the listed buildings. This is however a matter of considerable weight and importance having regard to the Framework. Paragraph 202 of the Framework requires such harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
19. Replacing unsympathetic uPVC windows with timber would improve the appearance of the dwelling and its contribution to the CA, a public benefit to

- which I afford modest weight. Generation of renewable energy from solar panels would contribute to tackling climate change and would be a small public benefit.
20. The existing dwelling requires considerable work to refurbish, modernise and address structural issues, and to improve its energy efficiency. These would be public benefits as they would enhance the appearance and enable long term retention of this character property, improving its contribution to the CA and the setting of the listed buildings. However, little of this work appears to be development for which permission is sought as part of this appeal. Nor has it been demonstrated that carrying out this work is dependent on the erection of the proposed side extension or the outcome of this appeal. Therefore, these benefits carry limited weight in the context of this appeal.
21. The proposed extensions would provide improved accommodation, however this would primarily be a private benefit to the occupants. It is suggested that the proposed side extension would also provide a way to improve structural stability. However, it has not been demonstrated that these benefits cannot be achieved by other means without the harm identified above. Therefore, they carry limited weight. Overall, I find that the public benefits of the proposed development would not outweigh the harm that the proposed side extension would cause to the significance of designated heritage assets.
22. Therefore, the proposed side extension would harm the character and appearance of the existing dwelling, the appearance of the Clifton and Hotwells CA, and the significance of White Hart Steps and Worlds End House. This element of the proposed development would therefore conflict with policies BCS21 and BCS22 of the Bristol City Council Core Strategy (2011) and Policies DM26, DM30 and DM31 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (2014) which collectively seek to ensure that development is not harmful and contributes positively to an area's character and identity, and that development proposals safeguard or enhance heritage assets in the city, including their settings. Furthermore, the proposal would conflict with the heritage policies of the Framework and the guidance in the SPD.
23. The proposed garden studio and link would extend a significant distance to the rear and would also be of a contemporary design and contrasting materials. However, it would replace existing outbuildings of a similar scale and given its siting and single storey height, it would not be visible from any public vantage point. Therefore, this element of the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the existing dwelling or the CA or the setting of any of the listed buildings. The proposed solar panels to the roof would have a limited visual impact and full details could be secured by condition to ensure these would not harm the character or appearance of the dwelling or the CA. New timber windows would enhance the appearance of the dwelling by reinstating the traditional materials. Therefore, I find no conflict with the above local and national policies in respect of these aspects of the appeal proposal. Nevertheless, this does not justify the harm from the proposed side extension.

Conclusion and Recommendation

24. The proposal would conflict with development plan policies in respect of design and heritage, and as such I find that it would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole. There are no material considerations, including the benefits of the proposal and the Framework, that indicate the proposal should

be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons given above, I therefore recommend that the appeal should not succeed.

B Phillips

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

25. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and agree with the recommendation. On that basis the appeal is dismissed.

L McKay

INSPECTOR