
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 December 2021 by B Phillips BSc MSc MRTPI

Decision by L McKay MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8 February 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/Z0116/D/21/3286165

66 North Road, Bishopston, Bristol BS6 5AJ

- 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 Helene Pirsch and Danny McGuire against the decision of Bristol City Council.
 - The application Ref 21/02579/H, dated 7 May 2021, was refused by notice dated 24 September 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as a two storey side extension, reinstatement of boundary garden wall and addition of PV panels to the roof.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to a two storey side extension.
2. The appeal is allowed insofar as it relates to the reinstatement of boundary garden wall and addition of PV panels to the roof, and planning permission is granted at 66 North Road, Bishopston, Bristol BS6 5AJ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 21/02579/H, dated 7 May 2021, and the plans submitted with it, so far as relevant to that part of the development hereby permitted, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin no later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 010, 015, 016.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the garden boundary wall hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing wall on the boundary of the site with Overton Road.

Appeal Procedure

3. 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.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the existing property and surrounding area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

5. The appeal property is a semi-detached dwelling set prominently on the corner of North Road and Overton Road. There is some variety in terms of architecture

nearby, and Gloucester Road to the west is a busy, eclectic commercial street at this point. However, both North Road and Overton Road are largely characterised by traditional two and three storey terraced or semi-detached dwellings, set back from the highway. Pairs of dwellings differ in design but despite alterations and additions over time, remain largely symmetrical, which contributes to the character and appearance of the area. Whilst there are properties opposite located on the highway edge, properties on the appeal site side of the road and along Overton Road towards Belmont Road are generally set back with front gardens. This results in a sense of openness and spaciousness, particularly at road junctions.

6. The appeal property is part of a traditional, symmetrical semi-detached pair, with both properties, like their northern neighbours, having matching pitched roofed side projections. These properties contribute positively to the traditional character and appearance of the surroundings. Although there is a small extension to the side of the existing dwelling, it is largely screened by the boundary wall so has little visual impact and does not affect the open character around the junction.
7. The proposed side extension would extend towards the corner junction and although set back from the front and rear of the existing building, its proximity to the highway at the side and its height would stand in contrast with the prevailing set back of surrounding properties. The design seeks to reduce the mass of the roof of the extension, falling away with the rising land levels, however the large expanse of tile on the side elevation would be clearly visible from Overton Road and would exacerbate the visual bulk of the extension so close to that road. Consequently, the scale and bulk of the proposed extension would harmfully reduce the openness prevalent at this corner.
8. It would also partly obscure views along Overton Road looking towards Belmont Road and David Thomas House, a former church which is a prominent and characterful building in the local area. I appreciate that there are other views of the former church, however the view up Overton Road is towards the gate and decorative main gable of this local landmark and is currently framed by the dwellings along the road. The narrowing of the gap at the junction would detract from that key view of the building.
9. The proposed extension would be set back and set down from the eaves of the existing roof. However, it would be wider than the existing two storey side projection, which would add to its visual prominence. The visual impact of the extension would be further exacerbated by the large circular window proposed to the front elevation. I understand that it is designed to provide light to two floors and there are circular windows to the west elevation of David Thomas House. However, the size and design of the window would relate poorly to the domestic scale and character of the appeal property and would appear at odds with the existing pattern of fenestration on its frontage, its attached neighbour, and the surrounding residential properties. Consequently, it would appear incongruous and out of place in this context and would further detract from the appearance of the host dwelling and its attached neighbour.
10. In addition, the angled shape of the extension and its side eaves would appear awkward when viewed from Overton Road, and, in combination with the circular window, would contrast harmfully with the traditional form and appearance of the existing dwelling. Taken together, these features would

make the proposed extension a prominent and discordant addition that despite being lower and shallower than the existing dwelling, would not appear visually subservient to it. Furthermore, it would harmfully compromise the symmetry of this pair of dwellings and diminish their contribution to the character and appearance of the area.

11. Local and national policies allow for contemporary and innovative design, and there are examples of contemporary design close to the site, such as the apartment building opposite. However, that is a large independent building with a consistent design, in contrast to the proposal before me, which seeks to add to a traditional semi-detached dwelling. The eclectic designs along Gloucester Road are in contrast to the largely traditional form and pattern of development along North Road. They are therefore materially different to the appeal site and the context for this proposed extension and do not justify granting permission.
12. Policies DM26 and DM30 of the Local Plan: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (2014) (DM), require development to respond appropriately to existing buildings, including their height, scale, massing, shape, form, materials, details and the overall design and character of the host building and the broader street scene. While the supporting text to Policy DM26 recognises the scope for contemporary design solutions, it does so where they would complement the existing development. For the reasons set out above this would not be achieved by the proposed side extension.
13. While I appreciate that a narrower extension would not provide sufficient useable space for the internal layout sought, this does not justify a design which would not respect or respond well to the character and appearance of the existing property and surrounding area. Given its small scale and limited visual impact, the removal of the existing lean-to would be of limited benefit which would not outweigh the harmful impact of the proposed extension.
14. Whilst conditions are suggested regarding altering the shape of the window and the materials of the extension, this would be a substantial departure from what is currently proposed and therefore it would not be reasonable for me to impose such a condition and permit a different scheme to what is before me, and which has been subject to public consultation. In any case, in the absence of drawings I cannot be certain that matching materials and a different window shape would overcome the harm caused by the visual impact of the proposed extension.
15. I therefore, conclude that the proposed side extension would be harmful to the character and appearance of the existing property and surrounding area. It would therefore conflict with Policy BCS21 of the Core Strategy (2011) (CS) and DM Policies DM26 and DM30, which collectively require development to be of high quality and create or reinforce local distinctiveness.
16. Furthermore, it would conflict with the advice set out in the Supplementary Planning Document 'A Guide for Designing House Alterations and Extensions' (2005) (SPD) which sets out general guidance, including that extensions to generally respect the built form, scale and proportions of the house and the characteristics of the wider area.
17. The Council has raised no concerns regarding the proposed reinstatement of the stone boundary wall. From the evidence before me, including my observations at my site visit, I see no reason to disagree. The photovoltaic (PV)

panels proposed to the main roof ridge of the existing property would be partly set behind the existing side projection gable roof and would not appear overly prominent nor incongruous.

18. Therefore, I conclude that the boundary wall reinstatement and PV panels would not be out of keeping with the character and appearance of the existing property and surrounding area. There would be no conflict with the requirement for high quality development of CS Policy BCS21, DM Policies DM26 and DM30 and the SPD in respect of these elements of the scheme. As these are clearly severable from the proposed extension, I can grant permission for these elements separate from my decision on the extension.

Other Matters

19. I acknowledge that that the development would make efficient use of space and provide improved accommodation and accessibility for the appellants. Nonetheless, it would do so in a manner that harms the character and appearance of the existing property and surrounding area. It has not been demonstrated that the existing dwelling is not fit for modern living, or that accessibility could not be improved by other means or with a more sympathetic design. While building to the boundary might prevent littering in this space, it has not been demonstrated that this problem, and the issues with damp, could not be addressed by other means. At present, waste bins are largely hidden by the boundary wall, therefore there would be very little benefit from providing alternative storage facilities away from North Road, and in any case there would be no guarantee that they would be used.
20. The appellant proposes to improve the thermal efficiency and sustainability of the dwelling including the PV panels and further works to the main house. I am able to approve the panels irrespective of the proposed extension. Therefore, it has not been demonstrated that the proposed extension is necessary to achieve some improvement to the performance of the dwelling or that the appellant's target of 20% carbon output reduction could not be achieved by a less harmful design.
21. Therefore, I can only give these benefits limited weight and given the importance afforded to good design in local and national policy, they do not outweigh the harm I have identified above. The lack of other harm set out by the appellant is noted, however, this is a neutral factor which does not weigh in favour of the development.

Conditions

22. In relation to the PV panels and wall, conditions for implementation and compliance with the approved plans is necessary in the interests of certainty. In order to safeguard the character and appearance of the area, a condition is needed to ensure the materials for the boundary wall reinstatement match the existing wall.

Conclusion and Recommendation

23. I have found that the side extension would result in harm to the character and appearance of the existing property and surrounding area. There are no material considerations that outweigh this substantial harm or justify granting permission for this part of the proposal contrary to the development plan.

24. The proposed reinstatement of boundary garden wall and addition of PV panels to the roof are however separate and clearly severable development from the side extension, and I have found that it would not result in harm. Therefore, I recommend that a split decision would be a logical outcome, by dismissing the proposed side extension and allowing the reinstatement of boundary garden wall and addition of PV panels to the roof subject to the conditions set out above.

B Phillips

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

25. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is insofar as it relates to a two-storey side extension. The appeal is allowed insofar as it relates to the reinstatement of boundary garden wall and addition of PV panels to the roof

L McKay

INSPECTOR