



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 April 2022

by Nick Davies BSc(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10th May 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/Z0116/W/22/3291054

Flats A & B, 260 Southmead Road, Southmead, Bristol BS10 5EN

- 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 C. Honor (Honor Properties Ltd) against the decision of Bristol City Council.
- The application Ref 21/03986/F, dated 23 July 2021, was refused by notice dated 23 September 2021.
- The development proposed is demolition of existing extensions and construction of a 2-storey side and rear extension. Provision of refuse and cycle storage.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - a) The effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area; and,
 - b) The effect of the development on the living conditions of the occupants of 262 Southmead Road with regard to outlook and overshadowing.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site lies in a mixed residential and commercial area alongside the busy B4056. The buildings are arranged parallel to the highway, and largely in terraces of two storeys, with roofs sloping up away from the road. The buildings are set back on both sides of the road behind short front gardens and forecourts. There is some consistency in scale, alignment, roof orientation and materials, but this is not an area that has a notably distinct character. The appeal building is one of a group of six two-storey residential properties, arranged in three semi-detached pairs with gables facing the road. Although they vary in their architectural details and fenestration, their overall scale, form, and alignment are uniform. They form a distinct and characterful group, that contributes positively to the street scene.
4. No 260 lies at the southwestern end of the group, and has a flat-roofed single storey extension across its entire rear elevation, with a smaller two-storey first floor lean-to above. Due to the low profile of the single storey extension, and the set back of the two-storey element from the side elevation, they are recessive elements in the street scene. The main frontage building is visually predominant. By contrast, the proposed two-storey extension would be wider

than the host building, covering all of its rear elevation and extending to the full width of the plot. It would also wrap around and conceal much of the side elevation, so the existing building would be largely subsumed. Although the extension would have a hipped roof, and its overall height would be a little lower than the existing ridge, it would, nevertheless be a very bulky addition that would overwhelm the original form of the building. It would not, therefore, be physically or visually subservient to the host building.

5. Due to the width of the extension, a flat section would be necessary on top of the hipped roof to maintain an overall height that is lower than the existing ridge. This hipped/flat roofed structure would cut awkwardly into the existing hipped roof at the rear of the existing building. The roofscape would be further complicated by the long slope that would extend down from the flat roof to the hipped lean-to roof over the ground floor entrance. This complex roof arrangement would not respect the simple form, proportions, and overall character of the host building. Consequently, it would appear as a contrived addition that would be harmful to the appearance of the building, and would diminish the positive contribution that it makes to the character of the townscape.
6. The extension would be visible in the street scene when approaching from the southwest, where it would be seen across the open forecourt of the adjacent commercial building. From this viewpoint, the unsympathetic scale and design of the extension would be readily evident. It is contended that a future redevelopment of the adjoining site would be likely to include frontage buildings that would screen the proposed extension. However, there is no evidence that any such scheme is under preparation, so the prospect that the harm to the character and appearance of the area is likely to be mitigated in this way is no more than a theoretical possibility.
7. In any event, the protrusion of the extension beyond the side wall of the existing building means that it would also be evident from directly in front of the site. At present, despite being at the end of the row, No 260 is seen as a constituent part of a cohesive group of distinctive buildings. The addition of the long sloping roof on the side, and the looming presence of the bulky extension behind, would mask the original form of the building. As a result, the symmetry of the group would be weakened. The proposal would not, therefore, contribute positively to the character of the area, or reinforce local distinctiveness.
8. For the above reasons, I conclude that the development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. As a result, the proposal would be contrary to Policy BCS21 of the Bristol Development Framework Core Strategy (2011) (the Core Strategy), and Policies DM26, DM27 and DM30 of the Bristol Local Plan - Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (2014) (the Local Plan). Taken together, these policies seek to ensure that development contributes positively to an area's character and distinctiveness, and that extensions respect the scale, form, and overall design of the host building, and are physically and visually subservient. The proposal would also fail to meet the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) to achieve well-designed places.

Living conditions

9. No 262 Southmead Road is attached to the northeast side of the appeal building. It has a single storey rear extension that projects a similar distance to

that at the rear of No 260. It also has a smaller first floor lean-to, which is paired with that on the appeal building, and is of similar extent and roof configuration. The rear gardens of the two properties are divided by a solid block wall to approximately two metres in height. The proposed extension would project the same distance as the existing flat-roofed single storey extension, but it would be two-storey along its entire length, with a hipped roof. Consequently, there would be an increase in the bulk of the building directly against the property boundary.

10. The Council's Supplementary Planning Document Number 2 - A Guide for Designing House Alterations and Extensions (2005) (the SPD) provides design guidance for house extensions. It advises that two-storey extensions are unlikely to be acceptable beyond 2.75 metres. In this case, the extension would project approximately 4.5 metres from the main rear elevation of the existing building. The Officer's report also refers to advice within the SPD that extensions should be set off the boundary by 1 metre. However, I have not been directed to the relevant part of the guidance, and I found no such requirement in the section relating to rear extensions. The introduction to the SPD states that it is not intended to impose rigid controls over detailed design matters, and the section on rear extensions indicates that the standards may be relaxed in some circumstances.
11. In this case the proposal would not project beyond the single storey extension on the adjoining property. Consequently, there would be no change to the outlook for occupants from the ground floor windows in the rear of No 262. The two-storey element would project further than it currently does, but as there are no first-floor windows in the rear walls of the adjoining property near to the boundary, there would, again, be no loss of outlook for occupants from within the building. As the increased bulk of the structure would be adjacent to, and above, the roofs of the adjoining extensions, the overbearing impact that may be expected from a two-storey projection of this extent would be much reduced. Therefore, in the particular circumstances of this case, the SPD advice on the maximum size of a rear extension should not be overriding.
12. The extension would lie to the southwest of No 262, so the increased bulk near to the boundary would have the potential to reduce light reaching this property. However, the orientation of the buildings is such that any reduction in sunlight would not be experienced until quite late in the day, and would mainly affect the roofs of the extensions, rather than the rear windows and garden. A Shadow Projection Study (the Shadow Study) was submitted with the appeal. The Shadow Study was prepared in accordance with the Building Research Establishment Report BR209 'Site layout planning for daylight and sunlight: a guide to good practice', which the SPD states is used by the Council in assessing proposals.
13. The Shadow Study shows that there would be no overshadowing of the windows or garden as a result of the development during the morning at any time of the year. There would be a small reduction in the area of garden receiving sunlight in the afternoon in spring, summer and autumn, and some shading of a rooflight in the rear two-storey lean-to in the afternoon in autumn and winter. The evidence therefore indicates that the overshadowing impact of the extension would be limited in extent and duration, and would not affect windows serving the main habitable accommodation.

14. For the above reasons, I conclude that the development would not have a significant overbearing or overshadowing impact, so would not harm the living conditions enjoyed by the occupants of No 262 Southmead Road. In this respect, therefore, the proposal would comply with Policies BCS21 of the Core Strategy and Policies DM27 and DM30 of the Local Plan, which seek to safeguard the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

Planning Balance

15. The building appears to be in need of renovation, and I have no doubt that the overall development would result in a significant saving on residual carbon emissions from the improved thermal insulation, air tightness and the installation of solar panels. The proposals would also improve the internal accommodation and provide a more attractive living environment for future occupants. However, there is no evidence to indicate that these benefits could only be achieved through the particular scheme that is proposed. Consequently, they carry limited weight, and do not outweigh the harm that I have found to the character and appearance of the area, and the conflict with development plan policies in this regard.
16. Paragraph 12 of the Framework says that, where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan, permission should not usually be granted.

Conclusion

17. There are no material considerations that indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Nick Davies

INSPECTOR