
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 January 2023

by Helen O'Connor LLB MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 January 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/Z0116/D/22/3308653

7 Wildcroft Road, Henleaze, Bristol BS9 4HZ

- 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 R McCaw against the decision of Bristol City Council.
 - The application Ref 22/02213/H, dated 3 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 17 August 2022.
 - The development proposed is a first floor extension over present garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a first floor extension over present garage at 7 Wildcroft Road, Henleaze, Bristol BS9 4HZ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 22/02213/H, dated 3 May 2022, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not 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: Location plan; Block plan and Floorplans and elevations, drawing number 2363-1G.
 - 3) The external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall be constructed in materials matching the host dwelling at 7 Wildcroft Road.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. Wildcroft Road is a relatively short cul-de-sac within a well-established residential neighbourhood. It comprises an assortment of residential apartments and houses that reflect different eras, forms and materials. Whilst most of the dwellings face onto Wildcroft Road, this is not universally the case. Hence, the overall impression is not one where there is a rigid sense of order or visual uniformity. Nevertheless, some coherence is derived from the generally open spacious aspects, two storey heights of buildings, reasonably clear building lines and the softening effect of greenery and trees visible in the street scene.

4. 7 Wildcroft Road is a semi-detached house within a group of dwellings¹ on the western side of Wildcroft Road dating approximately from the 1990's. Even within this short run of houses there are factors that add complexity to the overall street scene. These include alternating pairs of house types, with some incorporating accommodation above the garage as part of the original design. In addition, there is a detached dwelling at no.11, and no.3 has been considerably extended such that its width reads broadly equivalent to a group of 3 units rather than as a balanced semi-detached pair. In combination these factors disrupt the regularity of rhythm in this part of the street. Even so, the configuration does display a clear building line, and a broadly regular height and set back which is pleasing to the eye.
5. Whilst gaps between the pairs of dwellings within this fragment of the street scene add to its spaciousness, this is only one aspect of a more complex arrangement. Hence, breaks between buildings play a modest role in the overall character but are not intrinsically of significant value to the street scene or particularly locally distinctive. Overall, the appeal property reinforces the generally pleasant sub-urban character.
6. The proposal would introduce a first floor side extension over the existing garage, which already extends to the boundary with No.6. Due to the set back from the principal elevation, reduced roof ridge height and limited width, the side component would read as a subordinate addition to the host dwelling. The use of matching materials would further assist in giving this impression. As such, it would appear as a proportionate addition that would allow the balance of the semi-detached pair (Nos 7 and 8) to remain apparent in the street scene. Therefore, the proposal would respect the main dwelling and reinforce its role in the broader street scene.
7. In making my determination I have had regard to the Council's Supplementary Planning Document Number 2 entitled 'A Guide for Designing House Alterations and Extensions, October 2005' (SPD). It contains design guidance for those seeking to extend to the side of their semi-detached house. This includes that such extensions should be subservient to the existing house and that this can be achieved by setting back the extension from the front wall of the house and stepping down the roof ridge height. As mentioned above, the proposal would adhere to these principles.
8. The SPD goes on to caution against a cramped, 'terracing effect' where the gaps between detached or semi-detached houses are an important characteristic. It states that a side extension should ideally, where space is available, leave at least 1 metre between it and the adjoining boundary. That would not be achievable in this case, which is the Council's principal concern.
9. Nevertheless, the SPD is guidance rather than a mandatory requirement to be applied in all cases. This is reinforced by the use of the word 'ideally' as well as in the introduction to the document, which confirms that the SPD is not intended to impose rigid controls over detailed design.
10. In this context the settlement pattern is looser and the residential forms more varied than the illustrative examples given in the SPD. The complexity

¹ Numbered 3-11

inherent in the street scene at Wildcroft Road would be able to tolerate a greater variety of design in comparison with more regimented and uniform configurations.

11. Hence, although the gap between the upper parts of Nos.6 and 7 would be reduced, this would not be to the detriment of local character in this case as the gaps between the buildings are of limited importance to the overall street scene. The building line, overall height, proportions, detailing, materials and open aspect would all be respected which would safeguard the character of the host building, its curtilage and the broader street scene.
12. The Council refers to a potential terracing effect, especially if No.6 extends to the side. The proposal before me would retain a gap between Nos.6 and 7 as No.6 is presently set in from the side boundary. The information provided does not strongly indicate that No.6 would be likely to extend to the side, which in any event is angled differently to No.7. Moreover, it is likely that a two storey extension would need to obtain permission, which at that juncture would be judged on its own merits. As such, I attribute limited weight to harm arising from this concern.
13. Accordingly, I find that the proposal would have a benign effect on the character and appearance of the dwelling and wider street scene. Therefore, I find no conflict with the quality urban design criteria listed in policy BCS21 of the Bristol Development Framework Core Strategy, June 2011. Neither do I find the proposal would run counter to the general design principles intended to safeguard local character and distinctiveness in policy DM26 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Local Plan, July 2014 (LP). Likewise, the proposal would meet the expected criteria for alterations to existing buildings set out in policy DM30 of the LP, which includes amongst other things, that the proposal should respect the overall design and character of the host building and the broader street scene.

Conditions

14. The three year period in which the planning permission may be implemented is a statutory requirement. In the interests of certainty, it is also necessary to specify the plans that are approved, and that the development shall be undertaken in accordance with these. Like the Council, I have interpreted the submitted 'possible first floor plan' denoted on drawing number 2363-1G to mean the proposed first floor plan.
15. A condition is also imposed to ensure the external materials used in the proposal match those existing on the host dwelling as this will assist in integrating the proposal more seamlessly into the street scene.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Helen O'Connor

Inspector