
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 January 2023

by Helen O'Connor LLB MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31 January 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/Z0116/D/22/3307071

79 Minehead Road, Knowle, Bristol BS4 1BP

- 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 Sujeet Bhokare against the decision of Bristol City Council.
 - The application Ref 21/06887/H, dated 20 December 2021, was refused by notice dated 14 July 2022.
 - The development proposed is a two storey side/rear extension and single storey front bay/porch.
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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.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. Minehead Road and surrounding streets comprise predominantly two storey residential dwellings arranged in short terraces and semi-detached houses. The street scene in Minehead Road possesses a high degree of visual coherence which is derived from a number of components. These include the clear building line of dwellings facing towards the broadly straight road, the repeated use and largely regular placement of similarly configured dwellings and a limited range of materials. The terraces and semi-detached houses generally provide symmetry to the street scene, and as the pattern is largely mirrored on the opposite side of the road, this conveys a strong sense of balance and order.
4. In addition, the short terraces often employ gable ended dwellings on each "bookend". These serve to emphasise the underlying regularity of the layout with the form establishing a pleasing rhythm readily apparent in the street scene. Although some extensions and variations have taken place on some dwellings, there is a notable absence of two storey side extensions which means that the gaps between the upper parts of the built form comprise an important part of the rhythm. These factors combine to result in a distinctive ordered residential character to the street.
5. 79 Minehead Road is a gable fronted, end of terrace house in a short terrace of four dwellings (nos. 79-85). It lies adjacent to a similar bookended series of

four dwellings at Nos.71-77. The symmetry is clearly discernible within the terraced grouping, and the gap between no.79 and no.77 allows for an appreciation of this. As such, the appeal property makes a positive contribution to the street scene individually and within a group of dwellings by reinforcing the locally distinctive form.

6. The proposal would provide additional living accommodation in part by extending the property northwards at ground and first floor level. Although the upper storey would be set back from the principal elevation, the two storey hipped roof side extension would be clearly visible from the street, and would extend up to the side boundary with no.77. Such an arrangement would considerably erode the gap between the built form that distinguishes the series of nos.79-85 from nos.71-77. In addition, the continuation of a hipped roof to the side would add complexity that would both weaken the punctuating effect of the present gable end and dilute the visual balance of the group of dwellings at nos.79-85. Furthermore, it would adversely contrast with the otherwise broadly matching form of the gable end at no.77.
7. The proposed images provided by the appellant in his Statement of Case¹ serve to illustrate my concerns. Consequently, I cannot agree that the proposal would enhance local character by adding variety and articulation as is asserted, as such a design approach neglects the importance of the high degree of contextual visual coherence. Therefore, the proposal would disrupt the rhythm of built form and would appear cramped relative to surrounding houses. This effect would be exacerbated by the greater prominence given to car parking directly in front of the principal elevation of the dwelling, rather than being mostly accommodated to the side, as at present.
8. The appellant asserts that most other properties are located too close to each other for side extensions but there is little substantive evidence to support such a view. Moreover, even if the presence of an underground sewer at the adjacent property may deter the present owners from pursuing a similar side extension, such physical factors are not insurmountable. Therefore, given the general absence of two-storey side extensions in the vicinity, it is foreseeable that by permitting one such extension, it may provide some justification for others to follow. Incrementally, these could further erode the attractive spacing and rhythm within the street scene. This is a matter to which I attribute limited negative weight.
9. Both parties have referred to the Council's Supplementary Planning Document Number 2 'A Guide for Designing House Alterations and Extensions', October 2005 (SPD) which refers to gaps between buildings. It cautions against a cramped 'terracing effect' and indicates that a side extension should ideally, where space is available, leave at least 1 metre between it and the adjoining boundary. The Council point out that this would not be achieved in this case. However, the SPD does not set a mandatory requirement, and the use of the word 'ideally' indicates that there is room for judgement in each case. Moreover, this specific advice relates to the gaps between detached or semi-detached houses, whereas the appeal site is an end of terrace.

¹ Pages 7-8

10. Therefore, this aspect of the SPD is of limited weight, and I give greater credence to the general extension advice contained within it that states whatever the design or style of a property, where it forms part of a wider coherent street design it is important to ensure the original appearance is maintained.
11. I have had regard to the highlighted example of 6 Salcombe Road which has a two-storey side extension. I am not aware of all the circumstances that led to this development taking place, but as it concerns a semi-detached dwelling on a different street some distance from the appeal site, I am not persuaded it is directly comparable to the circumstances of the appeal scheme. Consequently, it has had little bearing on my determination.
12. Accordingly, I find that the proposal would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area contrary to policy BCS21 of the Bristol Development Framework Core Strategy, June 2011 that seeks to ensure a high quality of urban design. In addition, the proposal would be contrary to policies DM26, DM27 and DM30 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies, Local Plan, July 2014. Policy DM26 sets out general principles that require new development to respect the local character of the surrounding area including the form of existing buildings and characteristic rhythm. Policy DM27 is concerned with the successful arrangement and form of buildings, structures and spaces. Finally, policy DM30 relates more specifically to alterations and extensions to existing buildings, indicating amongst other things, that the form of proposals should respect the host dwelling and the character of the broader street scene.

Other matters

13. The proposal would provide increased internal space and improved accommodation that would be more comfortable and convenient for the appellant as well as future occupiers of the property. However, I am not persuaded that the proposal before me would be the only way to achieve such objectives. Therefore, whilst I attribute limited weight to this benefit, it would not outweigh, nor justify, the harm that I have identified.
14. The appellant also mentions the length of time the Council took to make their decision with no explanation provided or extension of time requested. However, this is not a matter which falls within the scope of my decision, which relates to the planning merits of the case.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Helen O'Connor

Inspector