



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 January 2024

by K Jones BA (Hons) DipLA CMLI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 01 February 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/F0114/W/23/3323396

**52A Specklemead, Paulton, Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset
BS39 7ND**

- 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 L Wyatt against the decision of Bath and North East Somerset Council.
 - The application Ref 23/00739/FUL, dated 23 February 2023, was refused by notice dated 20 April 2023.
 - The development proposed is the conversion of garage to a one bed dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was revised on 19 December 2023, with a further update on 20 December 2023. I have consulted the main parties on the changes to the Framework, and have taken the responses into account.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The appeal building is located on a residential street comprising semi-detached houses and semi-detached bungalows alongside a formalised area of garages and parking. Although this represents a varied built context, there is a clear character distinction between the residential dwellings and the functional garage units. This stems from the materials, form, and orientation of the buildings, alongside the domestication of front gardens and other residential features associated with the dwellings. The appeal building is now in a separate ownership and is fenced off from the original host dwelling at No 52 Specklemead. However, this separation is not readily apparent from the road, and at present the appeal building sits comfortably within this context as a functional ancillary garage at the rear of No 52.
5. The proposed development would involve works including removing the garage door, introducing windows, and creating a wider parking area leading to the side garden. Together these changes would represent a marked departure from the existing ancillary character of the building. However, the form and

orientation of the unit and its relationship with No 52 would remain that of a subordinate structure. This confused appearance would result in an incongruous building, failing to positively respond to either the residential character of local dwellings or the ancillary character of the nearby garages.

6. The plot pattern in the area is oriented to positively address the road, with frontages of the houses and bungalows typically presenting an outward-facing front garden with a clear route to a visible front door. As a detached unit with its primary elevation facing away from the road, the proposed dwelling would not reflect the local plot pattern and orientation of nearby properties. Instead, it would create a contrived plot without a clear frontage, tucked behind an existing dwelling, to the detriment of local character.
7. For these reasons, the proposed development would result in harm to the character and appearance of the area, in conflict with Policy CP6 and Policy D2 of the Bath and North East Somerset Local Plan: Core Strategy and Placemaking Plan incorporating the Local Plan Partial Update (January 2023). Taken together, these policies require, amongst other matters, high quality design which positively responds to the site context, in particular the local character, including spacing, building lines, materials, and building forms.
8. While the Framework is supportive of using brownfield land within settlements for homes and the development of under-utilised buildings, Section 12 sets out the importance of high-quality design. It seeks to ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, building types and materials to create attractive and distinctive places. For the reasons given above, I also find that the proposal would conflict with these aims of the Framework.

Planning Balance

9. The proposed development would make use of a small site to support the Government's objective to significantly boost the supply of homes, and I accept that one-bedroomed homes are an important part of this supply. Furthermore, the dwelling would be within the Housing Development Boundary of Paulton, where development plan policies are supportive of housing development in principle. However, as the proposal is only for one dwelling, any benefit associated with its provision in this location would be limited. It would 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.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given above, I find that the proposed development would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole. There are no material considerations which indicate that a decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with it. Accordingly, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

K Jones

INSPECTOR