



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 March 2025

by **A Dawe BSc (Hons), MSc, MPhil, MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/P0119/D/24/3357072

31 a, b and c Gloucester Road, Almondsbury, South Gloucestershire BS32 4HH

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Darren Lloyd of Panorama Place Limited against the decision of South Gloucestershire Council.
 - The application Ref is P24/01692/HH.
 - The development proposed is upper floor domestic extensions for all three dwellings; raising roof line to form additional living accommodation and roof terrace for each.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development in the above header is taken from the original application form. I note that this is different to the wording in the Council's decision notice and on the appeal form. However, I am satisfied that the above description adequately describes the proposed development.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:
 - i) the character and appearance of the surrounding area;
 - ii) the living conditions of the occupiers of 33a Gloucester Road (No 33a) with particular regard to privacy.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The proposed development would have a design consistent with that of the existing dwellings at 31 a, b and c Gloucester Road. However, the nature of the proposals, involving upward extensions, would add an additional storey to those dwellings, albeit with the proposed new rooms being restricted to above the existing south-east wing of each dwelling. As such they would be set back from the north-west facing elevations and would have a degree of separation between the respective new rooms of each dwelling.
5. The dwellings are currently set in the context of other surrounding houses of varying sizes and designs, some more prominent than others, sporadically located on the broadly north-west facing escarpment and along the ridgeline, and where there are varying degrees of mature tree cover, likely to be more of a feature in the

months of greater leaf cover. Those existing dwellings include others in the immediate vicinity that are at a higher level on the escarpment than 31 a, b and c. The dwellings concerned, at 31 a, b and c, are set further forward on the escarpment than most others in the immediate vicinity that are at a similar or higher level. However, their part one part two storey design, setting them into the escarpment slope, minimises their protrusion from the general topography and above the foreground vegetation to the immediate north-west. That combined with the degree of surrounding containment by other nearby dwellings, enables them to adequately sit in that context without appearing unduly prominent.

6. The existing dwellings on the site are visible to varying degrees from lower level public vantage points to the south-west, west and north-west. Those from the south-west are at a short range from Forest Hills and a little further away from Scop Field. Views from a more westerly direction include those from a public footpath set away from the escarpment that runs through the orchards below the site, and roads beyond, comprising Tockington Lane, albeit glimpses and generally sideways from vehicles, and then Moor Lane beyond that with varying degrees of clarity.
7. The extent to which the dwellings are visible from those vantage points varies depending on the precise viewing locations and the extent of intervening vegetation. Nevertheless, they are currently seen as being contained within that existing context of other dwellings, including at higher levels, and varying degrees of softening from intervening vegetation depending on the viewing point.
8. I acknowledge that the room extensions would only be over part of the existing houses and the intention for a retained uniformity and rhythm to the three dwellings together, including in terms of design features. However, the proposed upward extensions would be sufficient to have a noticeable additional massing effect.
9. That additional height and massing would noticeably increase the degree of protrusion of the dwellings away from the escarpment slope. This, together with the forward location and raised position of the dwellings on the escarpment, would noticeably increase the degree of prominence of the dwellings. From those vantage points referred to above, there would still be varying degrees of intervening vegetation screening or softening. However, the effect of that would be lessened to varying extents due to the proposed increased height and massing, and the dwellings concerned would also rise more distinctly above the vegetation immediately to the north-west of the site.
10. As a result, to varying degrees, it is likely that the dwellings concerned would no longer be seen as comfortably sitting into the escarpment slope and contained by those surrounding dwellings, even if backdrop trees and buildings may still be visible to some, albeit a lesser, extent. As such, the proposed development would cause the dwellings to stand out as dominant and obtrusive features in the landscape as seen from those various vantage points, including those at more of a distance away.
11. I acknowledge that there are large modern houses along Forest Hills which are prominent features. However, they are at a lower level and so less prominent in the wider landscape than would be the case with the proposed extended dwellings.

12. For the above reasons, the proposed development would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. As such, the proposed development would be contrary to policy CS1 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan: Core Strategy 2006 – 2027 (the Core Strategy) and policies PSP1, PSP2 and PSP38 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan: Policies, Sites and Places Plan, adopted November 2017 (the PSPP) which together, amongst other things, set out a requirement for the highest possible standards of design; siting, form, scale, height, massing, detailing, colour and materials to be informed by, respect and enhance the character, distinctiveness and amenity of both the site and its context; and that development proposals will be acceptable where they conserve and where appropriate enhance the quality, amenity, distinctiveness and special character of the landscape, including distinctive or characteristic topography and landforms.

Living conditions

13. The proposed upper floor extension to No 31c would include windows serving what is annotated on the plans as an entertainment room. Those windows would directly face towards the rear garden of No 33a. No 33a has a single storey pitched roof outbuilding alongside a significant section of the shared boundary with No 31c which would therefore prevent overlooking of a large proportion of No 33a's rear garden area from those windows. However, importantly, there would still be lines of sight either end of the outbuilding to parts of that rear garden.
14. Due also to the additional height of the proposal, there would therefore be direct overlooking, over the intervening boundary wall, from the largest of those proposed new windows to No 33a's private garden area closest to the rear of that house. Furthermore, when looking from the other smaller window there would be direct overlooking, over the intervening boundary fence and vegetation, of a small section of the lower level private garden area of No 33a. In both cases, whilst the proposed new room would be set away from the boundary with No 33a, that degree of overlooking would nevertheless be at a close range, to an extent that would be likely to cause a significant loss of privacy to the occupiers of that neighbouring dwelling.
15. Additionally, the proposed new roof terrace to No 31c would be positioned alongside and very close to the side boundary of No 33a. There is proposed to be a wall surrounding that space, shown on the plans to be 1300mm above the new roof terrace. However, at that height, it is highly likely that it would not be sufficient to prevent people comfortably looking over it. As such there would be direct overlooking from that space, at close proximity, of the lower private garden space of No 33a, albeit to varying extents due to existing intervening boundary vegetation. From that terrace there would also be clear overlooking towards the upper garden level of No 33a nearest to that house, including a covered seating area open to the rear. As such, again, that level of overlooking would be likely to cause a significant loss of privacy to the residents of No 33a.
16. I note that the Appellant claims in the Appeal Statement that the total screen height of the proposed roof terrace wall would be 1.6 metres. However, it appears that the reference line used relates to the existing roof level, as shown on the submitted elevation plan Drawing No A16, and not the finished floor level of the proposed new roof terrace.

17. For the above reasons, the proposed development would cause unacceptable harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of No 33a with particular regard to privacy. As such, it would be contrary to policy PSP8 of the PSPP which, amongst other things, sets out that development proposals will be acceptable provided that they do not have an unacceptable impact on the residential amenity of nearby properties which could result from loss of privacy and overlooking.

Planning balance

18. The proposed development would provide additional amenity space for the proposed houses which would be a likely benefit in the context of there being no existing garden space. Nevertheless, the existing terraces provide a good degree and quality of outdoor space, and I have no substantive evidence to indicate that to be inadequate in terms of the living conditions of the occupiers. In that context, the benefit of added amenity space would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm I have found would be caused in respect of the main issues.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

A Dawe

INSPECTOR