
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 February 2025 by A Conteh

Decision by L McKay MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 May 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Z0116/D/24/3356157

3 Bowerleaze, Sea Mills, Bristol City, Bristol BS9 2HJ

- 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 David Pullinger against the decision of Bristol City Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/02870/H.
 - The development proposed is addition of solar panels to the front and side faces of the roof of the property.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for addition of solar panels to the front and side faces of the roof of the property at 3 Bowerleaze, Sea Mills, Bristol City, Bristol, BS9 2HJ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 24/02870/H, and the plans submitted with it.
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawing nos DP02a-3Bowerleaze-Proposed-Elevations Rev 01 and DP02b-3Bowerleaze-Proposed-Roof-Plan Rev 01.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by a representative of the Inspector whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Preliminary Matter

3. I have omitted the words 'application for' from the description of development in the header and decision above as it does not relate to an act of development.

Main Issue

4. The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Sea Mills Conservation Area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

5. As set out in the Sea Mills Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2011), the significance of Sea Mills Conservation Area lies in a group of characteristics which define it as a Garden Suburb. One of these is the uniformity of design and architectural details among dwellings. The part of the Conservation Area around

the appeal site is characterised by two-storey cottage style family houses of simple uniform design with limited palette of materials and minimal external ornament.

6. The appeal property comprises half of a pair of semi-detached houses, which differ in roof material and window type. Additionally, I observed there to be variations in the boundary treatments, dwelling and roof materials of properties along Bowerleaze. These factors lead me to conclude the appeal site and its surroundings make a limited existing contribution to the uniformity of this part of the Conservation Area. Their overall simple form and appearance and the appreciable planned layout still contribute to its significance, however.
7. The proposed addition of solar panels to the appeal property would mean the visible and unsympathetic appearance of dark, rectangular objects on a red clay-tile roof. This would result in a further change to the design of roofscapes in this part of the Conservation Area, further diminishing the uniformity which characterises the Conservation Area as a whole. This impact would however be modest given the variation in roofs already found in this immediate area.
8. On site, I observed that the roof of the appeal property can only be seen from a small area and therefore, the visibility of the proposal from the public realm, and its visual impact, would be greatly restricted. In the wider Conservation Area, I noted several comparable examples of solar panels situated on the front elevation of dwellings. While these were, in some instances, approved prior to the publication of the Character Appraisal, may not have received planning permission or are a distance from the appeal site, their presence does have a bearing on the Conservation Area when viewed as a whole. Furthermore, having considered that the development will not structurally alter the roof, and will be a reversible addition to the dwelling, I accept that there is a low degree of permanence to the proposal.
9. These factors together mean that while the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, it would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the Conservation Area as a whole.
10. Consequently, the proposal would conflict with Policy BCS22 of the Bristol Development Framework Core Strategy (2011) (CS) which seeks to safeguard or enhance heritage assets. I also find some conflict with Policies DM26 and DM28 of the Bristol Local Plan Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (2013) (SADMP) and CS Policy BCS21 which seek to safeguard local character and the public realm.
11. The proposal would also conflict with aspects of SADMP Policy DM31 insofar as it expects development to conserve heritage assets. However, appreciation of the original form and planned layout of this part of the Conservation Area would not be affected by the proposal, and the existing properties no longer exhibit the uniformity which characterises other parts of the Conservation Area. Therefore, I find no conflict with the part of DM31 which requires development to preserve or enhance elements which contribute to the special character of conservation areas. DM31 does however support installation of micro-renewables in conservation areas where the works are the minimum required to achieve the energy efficiency improvements, which has been demonstrated by the appellant in this case.
12. The proposal would also comply with SADMP Policies DM27 and DM30 insofar as they encourage renewable energy generation and sustainability measures,

including through retrofitting existing buildings. Overall, therefore, there is limited conflict with the development plan when read as a whole.

13. Moreover, the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) is a significant material consideration. It requires that great weight be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets and that less than substantial harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. It also directs that significant weight should be given to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation
14. The proposal demonstrates clear and convincing environmental benefits, namely the annual reduction of 512 kg in equivalent carbon emissions and generation of 3,164 kWh in renewable solar energy. This contribution to energy efficiency and net-zero emissions aligns with the priorities, strategies and policies of national government and Bristol City Council. I therefore afford this significant weight.
15. Weighed against this is the harm to the significance of the Conservation Area. Given the small-scale nature of the proposal and the very limited impact it would have, the overall degree of harm to the heritage asset would be slight, and I therefore give the resulting policy conflict moderate weight.
16. Accordingly, from the evidence before me, I find that the public benefit from the proposal would outweigh the harm to the significance of the Conservation Area in this particular case. Consequently, the proposal would not conflict with the heritage and climate change policies of the Framework. This is a matter which I give significant weight, and which outweighs the limited conflict with the development plan when read as a whole and justifies granting planning permission.

Conditions

17. In the interest of certainty, conditions on the standard time limit for commencement and carrying out development in accordance with plans are necessary.

Conclusion and Recommendation

18. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be allowed subject to conditions.

A Conteh

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

19. I have considered all the submitted evidence and my representative's report and agree with the reasoning and recommendation. On that basis the appeal is allowed subject to the conditions listed above.

L McKay

INSPECTOR