



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 April 2025

by K Savage BA(Hons) MPlan MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 June 2025.

Appeal Ref: APP/Z0116/D/25/3360093

18 Leopold Road, Bristol BS6 5BS

- 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 Adam Powell against the decision of Bristol City Council.
 - The application reference is 24/04821/H.
 - The development proposed is a loft conversion including associated demolitions.
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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

3. The appeal dwelling forms part of a distinctive streetscene to the southern side of Leopold Road where it faces St Andrew's Park. Here, large, stone built dwellings are arranged in matching semi-detached pairs that descend the hill towards the junction with Effingham Road in a rhythmic, stepped manner. The consistent architecture of the dwellings, including double height bay windows, rendered window surrounds, porch canopies, hipped roofs and prominent chimney stacks, contributes very positively to the character of the area. Small but detailed front dormer windows are a further feature of the dwellings from No 14 to No 24.
4. The Council's Guide for Designing House Alterations and Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (October 2005) (SPD) sets out that many dormer windows are too large in relation to the roof slope and have a poor relationship to the original roof form. It adds that large, box-like dormers are inappropriate for the majority of domestic properties, and supports dormers which sit comfortably within the plane of the host building's roof, appear subservient in form and reflect the materials of the host building.
5. The proposed loft conversion would involve a hip-to-gable extension to the side of the main roof, removal of the existing chimney stack and creation of a full width, flat roofed dormer window to the rear roof slope. The loss of the hipped roof and chimney and enlargement of the roof slope would severely erode the architectural form and hierarchy of the dwelling, adding conspicuous, high level massing that would contrast with the more understated scale of the existing roof level, in particular the diminutive front dormer. The erosion of the original roof form and size and form of the proposed dormer would conflict with the guidance of the SPD.

6. The visual impact would be exacerbated as the changes would also severely unbalance the semi-detached pair. In longer views from the park or downhill of the site, the proposed gable would introduce a substantial blank wall at high level that would stand out conspicuously above the adjoining dwelling at No 16 and would significantly disrupt the consistent roof form and overall integrity of the run of dwellings to this side of the road, but particularly the three highly consistent pairs from Nos 14 to 24.
7. I have had regard to the wider street scene and to a number of dwellings referred to by the appellant where roof alterations have been undertaken. I saw side dormer windows installed to Nos 28, 32 and 34. In each case, a smaller dormer has been added to the retained side hip section of the roof and, as a result, the original form of the roof remains legible in views from the street. As such, I do not regard these examples as either directly comparable with the proposal before me or having a similar visual impact.
8. At the rear, there are a number of dormer additions to neighbouring dwellings, but the absence of other hip-to-gable extensions means full width dormers are not established features, with those I saw to Nos 14 and 16 and Nos 22 and 24 being modest in scale and maintaining the original roof form of the dwellings. In contrast, the proposed dormer would have a crude, boxy shape and substantial massing that would erode the original roof form and physically and visually dominate the dwelling in views from neighbouring properties to the side and rear. This top heavy, overbearing effect would be exacerbated by the proposed windows that would be larger than those below and would upset the natural hierarchy of fenestration.
9. An example immediately to the rear of the appeal site on Windsor Road has partially retained the side hip, with smaller individual dormers to the side and rear roof slopes that have pitched roofs that integrate into the main roof. Even larger, flat roofed dormers to Nos 32 and 34 are smaller in size as they are on roofs where the side hip is retained. A roof form similar to the proposal exists at No 48, but this appears to be a lone example some distance along the street on a dwelling of more modest scale and design. Overall, I am not persuaded that these represent comparable examples or indicate that the architectural character of the area has undergone significant change. Rather, they confirm my understanding that the street has largely maintained a strong consistency of scale, form and rhythm that would be severely harmed by the proposal.
10. The appellant argues that the guidance of the SPD is out-of-date as subsequent changes to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 means the hip-to-gable element of the proposal could be undertaken under permitted development, alongside a smaller rear dormer that cumulatively would meet the 50 cubic metre volume threshold. I have no alternative plans before me, and it is not my role in this appeal to determine the lawfulness of any other proposal. However, as described by the appellant, the proposal would have less overall massing and a potentially more proportionate rear dormer size. The fall-back position would not therefore be demonstrably more harmful than that proposed, which the appellant acknowledges exceeds the PD threshold. Consequently, it does not generate favourable weight for the proposal as a less harmful alternative.

11. The appellant also refers to an appeal decision at 2 Bishopthorpe Road. This differs from the appeal scheme as it involved a development already constructed and for which a lawful development certificate existed, such material considerations being decisive. I note the Inspector's commentary on the tension between the guidance of the SPD and subsequent permitted development changes, but although I have had regard to the SPD and its guidance on dormers, I have not based my considerations solely on that, but have had regard to the specific form of the building, the overall character of the area and the specific impact of the proposed scale and design of the roof extension on the appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding streetscape.
12. For the reasons set out, I conclude that the proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area, contrary to Policy BCS21 of the Core Strategy (2011) and Policies DM26, DM27 and DM30 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies document (2014) (the SADMP), which together address urban design quality and the need for development to contribute positively to an area's character and identity; by creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness and respecting local patterns and grain of development; including responding to roofscapes and architectural styles. It would also conflict with the similar aims of the National Planning Policy Framework to achieve high quality design in all development.
13. The Council also cites conflict with Policy DM28 of the SADMP, but this relates specifically to development affecting areas of public realm. Although the impact of the proposal would be observable from the street and park opposite, the proposal would not conflict with the policy in terms of the operation of the public realm itself.

Other Matters

14. The Council did not refuse the proposal in respect of neighbours' living conditions. The additional massing would be contained within the existing footprint of the dwelling, and would not create significant additional overshadowing for neighbouring occupants. The proposed windows would face the same direction as existing windows and would not present new opportunities for overlooking of neighbouring dwellings. The proposal would therefore be acceptable in these respects.
15. The proposal would add living space for the appellant and add to the overall size and functionality of the dwelling. However, these would be primarily private benefits. The public benefits of improving a single dwelling, including the economic activity generated in construction, would be limited.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons set out, the proposal would conflict with the development plan, taken as a whole. Material considerations do not indicate a decision should be made other than in accordance with the plan. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

K. Savage

INSPECTOR