

4th March 2024

Development Management
Cheltenham Borough Council
Municipal Offices
Promenade
Cheltenham
GL50 9SA

Dear Sir / Madam

Land adjacent to 1 Coltham Fields, Cheltenham GL52 6SP

Erection of 1no. two storey dwelling

Please find enclosed an application for planning permission for the development as described which we are submitting on behalf of our client.

The proposal is a further revised scheme following the approval in August 2022 of a two storey dwelling (ref: 22/00764/FUL) and the refusal of a revised scheme in October 2023 (ref: 23/00596/FUL). The site is in the designated Principal Urban Area and benefits from ease of access to the town centre. It is unquestionably a sustainable location for residential development and the principle of a new dwelling in this location has been firmly established through the August 2022 permission which remains extant.

There are no heritage or landscape constraints and the site has a low risk of flooding (flood zone 1). The design and scale of existing dwellings in the area, including this street, varies greatly.

The reasons as to why the previous revised scheme was refused in October 2023 related to design and a lack of mitigation with regards to the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC.

Planning Considerations

The proposal should be considered against the relevant planning policies within the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) for Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury (2017), the Cheltenham Plan (2020), and any other material considerations such as the policies within the NPPF.

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Design

Paragraph 126 of the NPPF states that "*good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities*". Paragraph 134 emphasizes the importance of good quality architecture in helping to "*raise the standard of design more generally in an area*".

The importance of design is recognised at a local level through JCS Policy SD4, which sets out the principles of architectural design in table SD4C, and Cheltenham Plan Policy D1.

Similar to the previous schemes, the application proposes a two storey dwelling with an inverted internal layout with the main day to day living accommodation at first floor level. As per the refused scheme, a U-shaped footprint is proposed which is considered to make more effective use of the plot with off-road parking for two vehicles provided within a central courtyard and an enclosed terrace above providing private outdoor amenity space.

The impact on the street scene is no more significant than the approved scheme, particularly in the context of numerous other gable fronted properties in the street. The development makes good use of an underutilised plot in a predominantly residential area where there is no consistent style or materiality. Whilst the design approach differs from the previous approval, paragraph 135(c) of the NPPF is clear that innovation or change should not be prevented or discouraged. Ultimately the proposal continues to accord with NPPF paragraph 135 in that:

- a) The development will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, particularly given the current condition of the site;
- b) The proposal would visually improve the site and the street scene, providing a good layout and appropriate level of landscaping;
- c) The proposal responds to the existing character of the area with two storey gables fronting the road and a red brick finish which can be found elsewhere along Coltham Fields and adjacent roads;
- d) The proposal will provide an attractive and distinctive place for the applicants to live and for guests to visit;
- e) The proposal makes good use of a site within a highly sustainable location;
- f) The proposal would provide high quality internal and external spaces which are safe and inclusive and accord with national space standards.

In comparison to the extant scheme, the proposal provides double the amount of private amenity space and vehicle parking, with the dwelling set back from the roadside in order to accommodate bin/recycling storage and an air source heat pump. These are discreetly positioned behind railings and planting. The building's orientation maximises solar gain.

To address the concerns raised within the refused application, the overall height has been reduced through the introduction of a flat roof and a contemporary design approach taken so the dwelling can be read in context with the recently constructed houses to the north and west. Whilst the proposed development may not be to everyone's taste, it represents good quality architectural design which makes effective use of an under-utilised plot in the PUA. The massing and scale of the dwelling would not harm or dominate the overall character and appearance of the area and certainly meets the relevant design policies and guidance.

Amenity

JCS Policy SD14 and Cheltenham Plan Policy SL1 both seek to protect the amenity of adjoining properties.

The design process has taken account of neighbours to avoid any potential significant adverse impact. There is no direct overlooking because high level obscurely glazed windows are proposed where necessary, whilst the first-floor terrace will be screened with obscure glazing as illustrated on the submitted plans. Any direct overlooking to existing properties is thereby avoided and the impact would be no greater than what results from the extant permission.

Access and Parking

Paragraph 115 of the NPPF makes it clear that proposed development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if the residual cumulative impacts on the highway network would be severe or on grounds of highway safety.

As previously noted, the site is within a highly sustainable location and future occupiers would not be reliant on the private car with no material increase or change in the character of traffic in the area arising from the proposal.

Off-street parking is provided with direct access off Coltham Fields, which is a 30mph speed restricted no-through road with minimal traffic movements. Secure, covered cycle parking is also provided and easily accessible.

Conclusion

The proposal represents a sustainable form of development that accords with the relevant JCS and Cheltenham Plan policies, as well as national policy and guidance contained within the NPPF.

There is no material harm arising from the proposed development, which is of a good standard of design that respects the presiding character of the area. The proposal makes use of an underutilised plot within the identified PUA and makes a small, yet positive contribution in helping the Local Authority address its ongoing housing land supply shortage.

As such, it is respectfully requested that the Council supports this application and grants planning permission accordingly.

Yours sincerely

Gary Dickens
SF Planning Limited