
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 November 2020

by Andrew Smith BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 09 December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/D/20/3258900

2 Fallowfield, Ampthill, Bedford

- 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 E Porter against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - The application Ref CB/20/02027/FULL, dated 17 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 17 August 2020.
 - The development proposed is single storey side/rear extensions with lower garage level to form annexe (use ancillary to host dwelling).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The Pre-Submission version of the emerging Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2015-2035 (the CBLP) was submitted to the Secretary of State in April 2018. There is nothing before me to indicate that the CBLP is currently at a stage that should attract anything more than limited weight. I shall consider the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - The effect upon the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area; and
 - The effect upon highway safety, having particular regard to parking.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal site occupies a prominent corner plot location within a residential area. Properties in the area are often single-storey and tend to be routinely positioned on consistent or similar front building lines setback from the highway. It is also the case that dwellings can typically be observed to occupy generously sized individual plots. The area thus has a formal and spacious residential character and appearance.
5. The appeal property is located to the south-eastern end of a row of similarly designed and consistently spaced dwellings (the row). At present, the property's southwest-facing side elevation is stepped back behind an

established building line (the building line) that is followed by the frontages of other dwellings contained within the row. The proposal would have the effect of introducing built form beyond the building line and thus in relative proximity to the highway.

6. The proposed extensions have been designed with hipped elements to their roofs and their ridges would be set slightly beneath the ridge height of the host property. I also acknowledge that the rear extension would be respectfully positioned in accordance with the building line. However, whilst the slight stepping down and hipping of the side extension provides a small reduction in its bulk and mass, its forward positioning relative to the building line would lead to the side extension appearing as an unduly prominent addition to the host dwelling and to the streetscene. This is particularly when viewed from eastern/south-eastern vantage points relative to the site.
7. Furthermore, the intended tall glazed openings and associated Juliette balcony feature that are proposed would fail to reflect the typical composition of street-facing elevations in proximity to the site and would further promote the side extension being read and experienced as a discordant feature. I accept that some variety in design can add visual interest and that a mixture of extensions and new-build developments will have come forward in the area in relatively recent times. However, I must consider the proposal that is before me upon its own individual merits and in the context of the formal and spacious residential character and appearance I have identified local to the site.
8. Upon inspection, I was unable to identify significant established planting that would meaningfully assist in softening views of the proposal. In any event, planting cannot be relied upon to provide a solid buffer to views. This is not least because it takes time to properly establish and is dependent upon regular maintenance to retain a consistent form.
9. For the above reasons, the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area. The proposal conflicts with Policies CS14 and DM3 of the Central Bedfordshire Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (November 2009) (the CBCSDMP) in so far as these policies require all proposals for new development to be appropriate in scale and design to their setting.
10. The proposal also conflicts with the guidance contained in the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide (September 2014) (the CBDG) in so far as it sets out that particular attention needs to be paid to the design of extensions on corner plots because they can encroach over the established building line on either highway frontage and appear particularly prominent within the street scene.

Highway safety

11. The proposal includes the retention of two on-site parking spaces to the side of the property and the creation of a garage at lower ground floor level. The CBDG guides that there is no best solution to provide car parking and that a combination of on-plot, off-plot and on-street will often be appropriate. Even so, the minimum parking standard for a 4-bedroom detached property, as set out in the CBDG, is three spaces.

12. The proposed garage's depth would measure less than 5.5m, such that its ability to accommodate a parked vehicle could, to some extent, be compromised. Nevertheless, upon inspection, I observed a quiet local traffic environment and potential on-street parking opportunities in the site's vicinity to be both plentiful and unrestricted. Thus, even should the garage be discounted as a realistic option for parking, the on-street parking situation and observed local traffic conditions provide assurances that an appropriate level of on-site provision is intended. Indeed, the scheme involves the construction of relatively modestly sized extensions to an existing dwelling and, as a result, holds limited potential to increase instances of on-street parking when compared to current circumstances.
13. For the above reasons, the proposal would have an acceptable effect upon highway safety, having particular regard to parking, and would thus not cause harm in this context. The proposal accords with Policy DM3 of the CBCSDMP in so far as it requires all proposals for new development to provide adequate areas for parking and servicing.

Other Matters

14. The National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019) promotes the effective use of land and the proposal would result in the creation of a residential annexe. Nevertheless, even though the site has good accessibility to surrounding facilities and services, the public benefits of the proposal would be limited and would not outweigh the considerable harm and associated policy conflict that I have identified. The proposal conflicts with the development plan when read as a whole, and material considerations do not lead me to a decision otherwise.

Conclusion

15. Whilst I have found that the proposal would be acceptable in highway safety terms, I have identified that considerable harm would be caused in a character and appearance sense. That harm is the overriding consideration in this case.
16. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

Andrew Smith

INSPECTOR