



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 9 February 2021

by Rachel Walmsley MSc, MA, BSc, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/W/20/3260606
130 Hitchin Road, Arlesey, SG15 6SA

- 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 Mr David Hillman against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - The application Ref CB/20/02269/FULL, dated 6 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 18 August 2020.
 - The development proposed is conversion of an existing house back into the initial two properties and a two-level extension. No change of use.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matter

2. The Council raised no objection to the conversion in principle. The reasons for refusal relate to the two-storey rear extension. In light of the evidence before me I find no reasons to deviate from this position. My decision, therefore, focuses on the rear extension and according to the main issues identified.

Main Issues

3. These are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area and on the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers with regard to outlook and light.

Reasons

4. The appeal dwelling and neighbouring properties are modestly proportioned. The development proposed would extend a disproportionate distance from the rear of the host dwelling and combined with its width, would appear unduly large and overly dominant in relation to the more modest form and scale of the appeal dwelling and nearby houses.
5. Perhaps unusually for a row of terraced houses the rear elevations are exposed to public views and therefore contribute notably to local character. The development would appear unduly large in local views and would read as an anomaly within the row of terraced houses. There are garages, outbuildings and rear extensions to the rear of the houses fronting Hitchin Road which create visual interest. But at first floor level buildings are more uniform and simpler in character. In this context the extension would appear overly dominant and unsympathetic to the traditional form and scale of the houses

and therefore would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. Although the development would be behind the building line set by the outbuildings at No 126 Hitchin Road, the proposal would be two storey and therefore would be more notable in local views than the development next door.

6. Some houses in the area have been extended in a similar way to that proposed but I have no evidence of how these extensions came to be or if they were considered against policy and found to be acceptable. As such, they do not compare fairly or reasonably with the appeal proposal. Notwithstanding this, extensions of this kind are not so numerous and prominent to form a defining feature of the area for the appeal proposal to be considered acceptable.
7. The extension would dominate views from the properties either side of the appeal site, particularly at No 132. Views down the garden from this property are currently limited by a two-storey rear extension. The development would create an increasingly oppressive outlook for the occupiers of this property and with a tunnelling effect.
8. As the sun travels from east to west, the development would overshadow the property at No 126. However, the areas most affected would be the existing outbuildings that do not have windows that would be affected by a loss of light. The development would not, therefore, create dark and gloomy living spaces that could be considered harmful to living conditions.
9. The appellant argues that a smaller extension would not be practicable. I have no details before me about the space requirements and any alternative configurations to comment on this further or give the matter weight in favour of the appeal.
10. I appreciate that the development has been purposefully designed and would accommodate space for homeworking. And I am also aware of the appellant's best intentions to co-operate with the Council and the planning system. However, for the reasons given, the development would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area and on the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers with regard to outlook. The proposal is therefore contrary to policy DM3 of the Local Plan (2018) and the Design Guide (2014) which, amongst other things, seek development that does not dominate the existing building, respects local distinctiveness and causes no harm to occupier's living conditions.

Other matter

11. The appellant has some grievances about the Council's approach to deciding the application. It is not within the remit of this appeal for me to comment on the circumstances that led the Council to its decision.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

R Walmsley

INSPECTOR