



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 December 2021

by Ian Radcliffe BSc(Hons) MRTPI MCIEH DMS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21st December 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/D/21/3274154

3 Chestnut Close, Ampthill, Bedfordshire MK45 2PU

- 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 G Lawrence against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - The application Ref CB/20/02575/FULL, dated 16 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 12 February 2021.
 - The development proposed is a side and rear two storey extension. Front porch extension and dual pitch rear single storey extension.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matter

2. Since the application was determined by the Council the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan has been adopted. As a result, the policies cited in the Council's reason for refusal have been superseded by policy HQ1 of the Local Plan.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. Chestnut Close is a residential cul-de-sac characterised by flat fronted, gable ended, semi-detached houses. The first three houses on the Close, including the appeal property, are unextended. As a result, the relatively wide gap that separates No 2 from No 3 allows glimpsed views of the rear gardens and creates a sense of spaciousness at the start of the Close. However, the majority of houses on the cul-de-sac have wide side extensions which means that overall the Close is enclosed and has an urban appearance.
5. Given this context a two storey side extension which is greater than half the width of the house, as is proposed, would complement the streetscene. However, unlike other two storey side extensions on the Close the proposal would also extend forward of the front elevation. In so doing it would bring undue prominence to the side extension. Notwithstanding the subservience of its roof height to the house, in combination with its link to the single storey front extension this would result in the side extension dominating the dwelling and adversely affecting its appearance. As a consequence, it would also harmfully unbalance the appearance of the semi-detached pair of houses of which it forms a part.

6. Reference has been made to the design of the roof to the side extension. Although somewhat complicated, given that the roof would be dual pitched and would have gable ends the side extension in this regard would complement the house. This positive finding though regarding this aspect of the design of the side extension is insufficient to negate the harm caused by its dominance.
7. The single storey rear extension would be acceptable in design terms. However, this is a matter that does not obviate the harm that would be caused by the side extension.
8. In recent years a two storey front extension has been built at No 6. However, this extension is narrow in width and its side extension has been set back from the front elevation. As a result, the extensions to this property are not as dominant as the appeal proposal.
9. Nos 17 and 18 have also been referred to which extend to the side to two storeys in height. Attached to the side of No 18 there is also a very wide single side storey extension. These extensions, in keeping with some of the other side extensions on the Close, are flush with the front elevation, rather than being set back as is supported by the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide (CBDG). I have not been provided with any further information though regarding these extensions which appear to have been completed some time ago. As a result, it is unclear if they were assessed against the current development plan and the CBDG or superseded policies and guidance. It is therefore not possible to make meaningful comparisons with the appeal proposal.
10. 2 Tavistock Ave has also been cited in support of the appeal. It is a house on a new estate in a different part of Ampthill and has a 4m wide two storey front extension. This house though is detached, and, unlike the appeal proposal, the extension has complemented the house by creating a dwelling with a symmetrical appearance.
11. Other two storey side extensions with front extensions have been referred to in Ampthill. As the front extensions though are only a single storey in height, and in two of the three examples given help create a front porch, they are not directly comparable to the appeal proposal and so do not provide material support for it.
12. Under permitted development rights prior approval was granted for a 6m rear extension at the appeal property. As a result, a house with a significantly larger floorspace than currently exists could be created. However, as the rear extension, unlike the appeal proposal, would not be readily evident from the street the existence of this prior approval does not represent a fall-back position of sufficient weight to alter my findings in relation to this appeal.
13. For the reasons given above, I therefore conclude that the proposed development would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the house and Close, contrary to policy HQ1 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan and section 7 of the CBDG. This policy and guidance require the protection of the character and appearance of a locality through high quality design that respects local design features. The proposal would therefore be contrary to the development plan and there are no other considerations that outweigh this finding. Accordingly, the appeal should be dismissed.

Ian Radcliffe

Inspector