



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 January 2022

by **P. D. Biggers** BSc Hons MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31 JANUARY 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/D/21/3286699

3 Rookery Road, Wyboston, MK44 3AX.

- 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 and Mrs Sharp against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application 21/00995/FUL, dated 6 April 2021, was refused by notice dated 01 October 2021.
 - The development proposed is single and two storey side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and its surroundings on Rookery Road and the Wyboston Land Settlement Association Area (LSAA).

Reasons

3. The appeal site sits on the west side of Rookery Road which forms part of the Wyboston LSAA. The character of this area is generally one of 2 storey residential properties along the road frontage with substantial plots of land to the rear. Many of the dwellings, including the appeal property, still have at their core the original two storeyed simple, steeply roofed, dormered cottage typical of the area which face onto the road. Over time these original cottages have either been extended on the frontage or more typically, as with the appeal property, extended in depth to the rear in a variety of styles.
4. In the case of the appeal property the existing two storey enlargement of the property to the rear has been executed well and the house now takes the form of two gabled wings (one of which is the original cottage) 'bookending' an indented central section to the house. The result is an attractive symmetrical appearance to the whole property. A small detached single storey outbuilding to the existing house currently contains a store and utility area and this would be replaced by the single storey element of the proposal on broadly the same footprint as the existing.
5. I have been referred to a similarly designed property at No 20 Rookery Road which has been extended in virtually the same manner as proposed on the appeal site and, as this was approved by the Council, the appellants consider this justifies the appeal proposal. I accept that the two properties are similar and that the extension to No 20 is similar to that proposed at No 3. I also acknowledge that, ordinarily, decision making for similar proposals should be consistent. However, in

this particular case, it is clear from assessing on site the effect the extension has had on the character and appearance of No 20 Rookery Road, that the design is not one that should be replicated because of the impact of the scale, mass and form of the extension on the building's character. I consider the potential harm to the character would outweigh the importance of consistency in this case and therefore I will consider the proposal at No 3 on its own merits.

6. It is clear from Policy AD44 of the *Bedford Borough Allocations and Designations Local Plan* (BBADLP) dealing with development in the Wyboston LSAA that the principle of extensions would not be inappropriate. However the policy requires as one of its tests that development should respect the style, scale, appearance and orientation of the original dwellings and separation between them and I consider the extent to which the proposal meets this test below.
7. The two storey extension to the existing property would represent a significant increase in floor area, footprint and mass. I accept that viewed 'square on' from the road the extension on the north side would be set back and slightly lower than the ridge of the original house maintaining a subservient relationship and retaining the appearance of the original cottage fronting the road. However, viewed in the approach to No 3 from further north on Rookery Road, across now generally open ground, the proposed extension because of its positioning, scale, height and mass would disrupt the symmetry of the original house, and appear as a disproportionate addition, dominating and supplanting the existing and attractive character and appearance.
8. It has been put to me that the design of roof to the extension, with its double gable and infilled central section, has been proposed to reduce the bulk of the extension and reflect the original character. Whilst this might be achieved in the views from east and west, the insertion of the crown flat roof between the two gables would appear an alien and unattractive addition to the north facing elevation. The effect this extension would have on the character and appearance of the property can clearly be envisaged by comparing the extension to No 20. Design Code E2 of the Council's *Design Codes for Extensions* clearly advises that detailed design of extensions should reflect the character of the existing building in terms of roofscape, amongst other things, and in this case the proposed alteration, as a result of the mass and height of brickwork and proposed roof form, would fail to do so.
9. Regarding the single storey side offshoot to the main extension as this would be low and narrow, largely reflecting the existing single storey building it would replace, I am satisfied that, in itself, this element of the proposal would be acceptable. However, as it is an integral part of the main extension and physically and functionally linked to it, this element cannot be progressed independently which is sometimes possible by issuing a split decision on the appeal.
10. The *National Planning Policy Framework* (the Framework) at paragraph 130 requires that developments must be sympathetic to local character to create high quality buildings and spaces amongst other things and at paragraph 134 that development that is not well designed should be refused. Policies 28S and 29 of the *Bedford Borough Local Plan* (BBLP), on place making and design quality respectively, reflect the Framework in requiring high quality design that integrates with and complements the character of the area and takes opportunities to enhance that character. In addition, BBLP Policy 30 in requiring development to be designed to contribute to townscape and landscape qualities and to be compatible with the scale, massing, height, layout and materials of the context in which it sits is also consistent with the Framework. For the reasons above the proposed

extension to the property would be disruptive to the scale and form of the original building and detrimental to its character and appearance as a result of poor design and would therefore be in conflict with these BBLP policies and the Framework. Moreover, as the extension would not respect the style, scale and appearance of the original dwelling it would also be in conflict with Policy AD44 of the BBADLP and the *Design Codes for Extensions* referred to above.

Other Matters

11. I understand the appellants' wish to achieve additional accommodation in the extension and in that way make sustainable and effective use of housing land, an objective which is encouraged by the Framework in Section 11. However, paragraph 124 in the same section of the Framework states that this should not be at the expense of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting. As such, sustainable and effective use of the dwelling would not, of itself, outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the original dwelling and Rookery Road as a result of the proposal.
12. I have had regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in the Equality Act 2010 and I note that the appellants state that the additional accommodation would be, at least in part, for an elderly member of the household. Whilst the needs of the disabled and frail can clearly be a material consideration it has not been demonstrated in the evidence before me the precise nature of the need and why it is essential it is met in this way. I am not persuaded therefore that in this case there would not be an alternative way to meet the need, without constructing the scale of extension proposed and the detriment to the character of the property that would arise.

Conclusion

13. In reaching my decision I have had regard to the matters before me and for the reasons above the appeal should be dismissed.

P. D. Biggers

INSPECTOR