
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 February 2022

by J D Westbrook BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7TH February 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/D/21/3284502

1 Church View, Ampthill, BEDFORD, MK45 2PZ

- 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 M Smith against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - The application Ref CB/21/02670/FULL, dated 7 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 18 August 2021.
 - The development proposed is a loft conversion with rear facing dormer window; the construction of a first-floor extension to the existing detached garage with a glazed first floor link; and alterations to the rear conservatory roof.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The Council considers that there would be no significant issues relating to those elements of the proposal that involve the loft conversion, and that the proposed scheme as a whole would not result in significant adverse effects on the residential amenities of neighbouring houses. I concur with these views, and the main issue in this case, therefore, is the effect of the proposed first-floor extension to the garage on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a detached house located near to the entrance to Church View, which is a small group of dwellings situated at the head of Rushbrook Close. All of the dwellings on Church View have similar design features including a small forward projection with a gable front and half-hipped roofs to the houses and the garages. The half-hipped roofs are a locally distinctive feature of Church View. The garage at No 1 is located well to the front of the dwelling, but is sited against the southern boundary wall, and the house itself remains clearly visible above and beside it. The proposed development would involve the construction of a first-floor room above the garage, which would be joined to the main dwelling by a glazed 'bridge' at first-floor level. The building would be increased in height by around 1.7 metres, and the half-hipped roof would be replaced by a pitched roof with front and rear gables. There would be a large glazed window with a juliet balcony in the front gable above the garage doors.
4. Policy HQ1 of the Council's Local Plan indicates that development proposals should take account of opportunities to enhance or reinforce the local

distinctiveness of the area, and that the size, scale, massing, materials and appearance should relate well to the existing local surroundings and reinforce local distinctiveness.

5. The Council contends that the proposed increase in height of the garage and the first-floor link between the garage and the house would, by reason of their size, siting, form and design, appear unduly conspicuous and dominant in the street scene to the detriment of the character and appearance of the dwelling and the visual amenities of the wider street scene. It would not, therefore, represent a high-quality design.
6. The appellants contend that since Nos 2, 3 and 4 Church View are higher than the appeal site, the proposed extension would not appear dominant when compared to the surrounding properties. Moreover, from these properties the new slope of the new roof would reduce the impact and the glazed link would not appear incongruous due to the fact that it is only visible from the side elevation. Furthermore, the raised roof ridge would sit just above the eaves height of the main house and significantly below the ridge line, while the new gabled elevation would reflect the gabled feature on the front elevation of the existing dwelling. Finally, they contend that the proposed extension would provide a modern interesting feature to the property, located in the corner of the cul-de-sac where it would not appear intrusive.
7. I note the comments of the appellants, however, the position of the garage, well to the front of the house, means that it is a prominent feature on the plot, and the proposed increase in height would result in a greater proportion of the front elevation of the house being obscured. Moreover, the loss of the half-hipped feature of the garage roof would appear at odds with the prevailing and distinctive appearance of all of the buildings, both houses and garages, in Church View. The front gable would be a dominant feature, and the large glazed element and Juliet balcony in the first floor of the front elevation would appear somewhat incongruous in the context of its immediate surroundings.
8. On balance, therefore, I find that the proposed first-floor extension above the garage would be a dominant and somewhat incongruous feature of the property, harmful to the distinctive character and appearance of Church View. On this basis, it would conflict with Policy HQ1 of the Local Plan.

Other Matters

9. The appellants have made note of three other cases in the wider surrounding area where forward gable extensions have been allowed. However, two of these examples date back to an earlier policy framework and, in any case, the situation and/or design of these examples reflect a different context. Moreover, whilst every proposal must be assessed on its own merits, to allow this development could encourage the submission of further similar proposals which would be progressively more difficult for the Council to resist and which could cause cumulative harm to the character of the immediate surroundings. This adds weight to my conclusion above.

J D Westbrook

INSPECTOR