



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 February 2022

By A. J. Boughton MA (IPSD) Dip.Arch. Dip.(Conservation) RIBA MRTPI
an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10th March 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/D/22/3290408

The First House, Margetts Road Kempston MK42 8DS

- 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 Shreeves against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref: 21/02199/FUL, dated 2 August 2021, was refused by notice dated 8 November 2021.
 - The development proposed is first floor side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposed side extension:
 - on the character and appearance of the area, and
 - on living conditions of neighbouring users

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. Margetts Road is a quiet residential street with dwellings, primarily of late nineteenth and early twentieth century design, in terrace blocks or pairs tightly arranged along its length to a consistent building line. Dwarf walls or railings at back of pavement enclose small foregardens. The section of Margetts Road containing the appeal site, between the junction with Cater Street and Bedford Road differs, being more open including two larger detached dwellings (1 and 1A Margetts Road) and the appeal site.
4. The First House is a twentieth-century insertion into the road, and sits between the rear boundary of 124 Bedford Road and the much smaller side garden of No. 1 Margetts Road. It is therefore, by its age, use of materials, appearance and setting, uncharacteristic of the wider street scene.
5. The proposed side extension adds living accommodation above the existing garage and therefore raises the roofline to be close to that of the main roof. The Council indicate that this set-down is insufficient such that the upper storey extension would fail to appear subordinate and therefore conflict with code E1 of the Council's adopted design guidance Residential Extensions New Dwellings and Small Infill Development 2000 (RENSID).

6. The purpose of such guidance is usually to support an existing pattern of development in its grain and rhythm by preventing additions which unbalance appearance in the context of other, surrounding, development. The host dwelling does not sit within a context of similar dwellings. It is not necessary to calibrate change of appearance as might be necessary in locations where nearby buildings have a more consistent appearance and character. For that reason also the 'undercroft' could not be uncharacteristic.
7. However, although the individual character of the host dwelling and its setting does not necessitate visual subordination as the Council suggest, as proposed the nominal set down and small setback of the façade is visually awkward. Such small divergence in otherwise similar building surfaces would undermine visual coherence and it would not be clear if the nominal step in the roof line arises from error or is intentional. This would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. Consequently, the proposal both fails to present as subordinate to the host dwelling, which would accord with design guidance, or, in the alternative, fails to blend with the original structure as a continuous roof surface and façade which could, by the careful material choice, be acceptable.
8. Taken together, the relevant policies of the adopted Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 (BBLP) seek to ensure development is of high quality, recognising the character of, and retaining a positive relationship with, the surrounding area, looking to reinforce or retain local distinctiveness through high quality design. Given the setting of the proposed development and for the reasons I set out above, I conclude that the proposal would not achieve a high standard of design. It therefore conflicts with the objectives of policy 28S(i) and (ii), and policy 29(i) of the BBLP which seek high quality design, and also with the guidance set out in RENDSID for extensions.

Neighbouring users

9. The proposed side extension would be adjacent to the rear boundary of 124 Bedford Road, a large property with an extensive side-rear garden on the corner of Bedford Road and Margetts Road. Although the proposal would increase the bulk of built form of the existing dwelling towards its neighbour, notwithstanding its position to the southern side, this would be no more than an incremental change to any existing overshadowing or overbearing effects. Any such effects would occur in proximity to a part of the lengthy perimeter of this relatively large garden and at significant distance from the main house and its habitable rooms.
10. I therefore conclude that no unacceptable harm would arise to the amenity of neighbouring users at 124 Bedford Road and there would be no conflict with Policy 32 of the BBLP or the Council's design guidance (RENSID) in this regard.
11. Nevertheless, although I have found no conflict with the relevant policies of the development plan to justify the Council's second refusal reason this does not outweigh my conclusion as to the failure to achieve a high standard of design and, therefore, the proposal does not accord with the development plan taken as a whole. Consequently, taking all matters into account and for the reasons given, the appeal cannot succeed.

Andrew Boughton

INSPECTOR