



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 July 2022

by Sarah Colebourne MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 August 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/D/22/3297640

6 Church Avenue, Ampthill, Bedford, MK45 2PN

- 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 James Burke against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - The application Ref CB/21/05599/FULL, dated 17 December 2021, was refused by notice dated 11 March 2022.
 - The development proposed is a single storey rear extension and two storey front extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed insofar as it relates to the single storey rear extension only and planning permission is granted for a single storey rear extension at 6 Church Avenue, Ampthill, Bedford, MK45 2PN in accordance with the terms of the application Ref CB/21/05599/FULL, dated 17 December 2021, subject to the following conditions:-
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans insofar as they relate to the rear extension only: Drawing no 002B 1/2/22.
 - 3) The materials used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Reasons

2. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the dwelling and the street scene. The development plan includes policy HQ1 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2015-2035 (adopted 2021) (LP) which seeks to ensure that all developments are of the highest possible quality and reinforce local distinctiveness.
3. Church Avenue is a tree lined road which comprises detached houses built in the 1950's, mostly in a similar style whose principal feature is a main catslide roof which extends from the ridge to above the front door. The appeal dwelling is the third dwelling in a row of five on this side of the road which were originally built to a uniform design with a main catslide roof with two small dormer windows and a subsidiary projecting gable over the integral garage.

Although the fourth dwelling at no 8 has dark coloured windows and the fifth at no 10 has a two storey front extension (approved in 2002) with a shallower projecting gable, they retain the catslide roof and dormers. On the opposite side of the road, some dwellings have been altered but again retain the catslide roof. No 13 has been successfully extended with a steeper pitched, subsidiary one and a half storey front extension and an attractive mix of materials. The front elevations are therefore generally consistent, with catslide roofs, dormers and subsidiary projecting gables forming important, attractive features which contribute positively to the local distinctiveness of the street scene.

4. The proposed development includes a two storey front extension and a single storey rear extension. I have noted that the Council has not raised any objection to the rear extension and I agree on the basis of what I have seen, that it would be appropriate.
5. In regard to the front extension, however, I have strong concerns. The siting and design of the proposal would result in three projecting gables across the front elevation and the catslide roof and dormers which are such an integral part of the character of the dwelling would be lost. The ridge of the projecting gable above the integral garage which is at present subsidiary to the main part of the dwelling, would be raised to almost the height of the main ridge. Due to this excessive scale, it would become an overly dominant rather than a subsidiary element. The design of the single pitched and gabled roof of the hall/porch would introduce a feature that would be uncharacteristic of this style of dwelling and at odds with the catslide roofs over front doors common elsewhere in the street. The proposed synthetic slate roof tiles would have a different texture, size and colour to the traditional tiles which predominate in the street and their uncompromisingly modern appearance would detract from the consistency of the street scene.
6. The appellant has referred to a number of approved extensions in the area and I will address those that I have not already referred to. I have noted that the scheme originally approved in 2017 for no 13 included a projecting gable of only 500mm lower than the main ridge but that scheme was not the one that was subsequently approved and built and, in any case, both local and national planning policies since then have strengthened the importance of good design.
7. The extension approved and built at no 9 differs from this proposal in that it is smaller in width and has a hipped rather than a gabled roof. It therefore has a lesser impact than the projecting gable in this case. Whilst the officer's report found that the dwelling had no significant architectural merit and I accept that the dwelling in this case is not listed or in a conservation area either, that is not the same as local distinctiveness which can be present in non-heritage locations.
8. The approved extensions at Brinsmade Avenue differ because the catslide roof was retained and the gabled extension was one and a half storeys rather than two as is the case here.
9. None of those extensions then are directly comparable to that proposed here and do not provide justification for the harm that would be caused in this case.

Conclusion and conditions

10. The proposed front extension would be clearly seen in the street scene. It would fail to reflect the local distinctiveness of the street scene and is not, therefore, of the highest quality. It would, by reason of its size, siting, materials and design, significantly harm the character and appearance of the dwelling and the street scene, contrary to the development plan policies referred to above. There are no material considerations that would outweigh that.
11. As the front and rear extensions are clearly separate elements and I agree with the Council that the rear extension would be acceptable, I shall issue a split decision. In addition to the standard commencement condition, a condition is necessary requiring that the proposed rear extension is carried out in accordance with the approved plans (insofar as it relates to that element only), in order to provide certainty. A condition requiring matching external materials is necessary in the interests of the character and appearance of the dwelling.
12. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed, insofar as it relates to the rear extension only. Insofar as it relates to the front extension, the appeal should be dismissed.

Sarah Colebourne

Inspector