

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 September 2022

by Andrew Dale BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 October 2022.

Appeal Ref. APP/P0240/D/22/3298129 75 Waterdell, Leighton Buzzard LU7 3PH

- 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 Stephen Lee against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - The application ref. CB/21/04810/FULL, dated 25 October 2021, was refused by notice dated 1 March 2022.
 - The development proposed is a first floor extension to side.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a first floor extension to side at 75 Waterdell, Leighton Buzzard LU7 3PH in accordance with the terms of the application ref. CB/21/04810/FULL, dated 25 October 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 numbered, titled and dated: 203 Location Plan 25.10.21; 101 Existing 13.10.21; and 102 Proposed E 15.02.22.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Main issue

2. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the dwelling and its surroundings.

Reasons

3. On my visit, I saw that Waterdell is primarily characterised by 2-storey, semi-detached houses. The appeal property is one such example. It forms a semi-detached pair with no. 73 and occupies a corner plot at the junction of Waterdell and Capshill Avenue.
-

4. Across the appeal property's original south-eastern flank, a 2-storey side extension and ground floor front and rear extensions have been added, presumably pursuant to planning permission ref. SB/98/00520. The upper level of the side extension provides the main bedroom and is served by dormer windows. The appellant wishes to reconfigure that room so that an upstairs bathroom can be put in as well as a new en suite for the bedroom itself. This would be achieved by raising the height of the existing side extension by about a metre so that its eaves would line up with the main first floor eaves and by omitting the dormer windows in favour of first floor windows in the front and rear wall faces which would match the remaining first floor windows.
5. The symmetry of the original semi-detached pair was somewhat distorted by the implementation of the approved scheme. The proposed side extension is effectively limited by the existing footprint below. Its width would not be materially different to the width of the existing first floor side extension which is notably less wide than the original house. It would be set back 0.5 m from the original front and rear building lines, set down about 0.3 m from the main ridge and follow the line and pitch of the existing main roof. The proposed extension would be well executed and sympathetic in terms of its pitched roof profile, design, form, scale and siting. I am satisfied that the first floor side extension would be part of what would remain as a subservient side wing of the host property and would not seriously unbalance the pair of semi-detached houses. As there is no other dwelling immediately adjacent to the south-eastern flank wall of no. 75 and the scheme would not bring the building any closer to Capshill Avenue, the proposed extension would not be perceived as a visually cramped form of development on this prominent corner plot.
6. The Council's Central Bedfordshire Design Guide (CBDG), adopted in 2014, carries weight as a material consideration in decision making. Section 7 of the CBDG deals with householder alterations and extensions. In reaching the findings in the above paragraph, I have not come across any material conflict with the design principles in the CBDG.
7. The side elevation is currently presented as a rather awkward, wide-spanned gable end given emphasis by the unbroken eaves line running through the ground and first floor sections. Of some importance, in my view, is how the proposed addition would break up that eaves line and produce a gable end with an enhanced vertical emphasis which would appear more visually integrated with the host building. The CBDG says that dormer windows should be avoided on prominent elevations that can be clearly viewed within the street scene. The existing front and rear dormers come into this category. The appeal scheme would, of course, see them removed. The result overall would be a well-mannered and more aesthetically pleasing dwelling than the existing property as previously extended.
8. Noting the proposed use of matching facing materials and fenestration details, I consider that the proposed development as a whole would represent a visually attractive solution, exhibit a high standard of design, be sufficiently complementary and subordinate to the parent building and be respectful of the established street scenes along Waterdell and Capshill Avenue. I therefore conclude on the main issue that the proposed development would not result in harm to the character and appearance of the dwelling or its surroundings.

9. As the proposed first floor side extension would be an example of high-quality design, respond positively to its local context, show sufficient regard for the CBDG when viewing the case in the round and cause no material harm to the character and appearance of the dwelling and the locality, there would be no conflict with the aims of Policy HQ1 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2015-2035 or with the National Planning Policy Framework insofar as it relates to achieving well-designed places.
10. The scheme will enhance the quality of life for the occupiers of no. 75 by improving the bedroom and bathroom accommodation and energy efficiency at first floor level. This is a further factor that weighs in favour of granting planning permission. The Council, correctly in my view, did not identify an excessive loss of amenity for neighbouring properties for any reason. I saw that there are various extensions to be found on Waterdell (at nos 34 and 66) and on other nearby streets (39, 41 and 71 Brooklands Drive, 10 Highfield Road and 59 (not 60) Linwood Grove), as referred to by the appellant. However, I do not have the relevant planning history of those cases before me, whilst the latter example involves a property at the end of a short terrace of 4 houses. I have determined the appeal scheme on its own merits.
11. In addition to a condition setting a time limit for the commencement of development, a condition requiring that the development is carried out in accordance with the relevant approved drawings is necessary as this provides certainty. I have also imposed the Council's other suggested condition on materials to ensure that the development would preserve the character and appearance of the dwelling and locality.
12. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised and the absence of objections from Leighton-Linslade Town Council and neighbouring residents, I conclude that this appeal should be allowed.

Andrew Dale

INSPECTOR