



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 September 2022

by R Sabu BA(Hons), MA, BArch, PgDip, RIBA, ARB

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 October 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/W/22/3298097

Stotfold Dental Clinic, 5 The Avenue, Stotfold, Bedfordshire SG5 4LY

- 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 Stotfold Dental Clinic against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - The application Ref CB/22/00549/FULL, dated 8 February 2022, was refused by notice dated 6 April 2022.
 - The development proposed is single-storey rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and surrounding area; and
 - the effect of the proposal on parking provision and highway safety.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The site lies on the corner of The Avenue and High Street. Given the orientation and siting of No 5 The Avenue (No 5), it has a closer relationship to High Street than The Avenue. The area surrounding the appeal site on High Street is characterised by buildings of a variety of forms but with a traditional style. The set back and spacing of the buildings in the area also result in a spacious feel. Although there are a small number of buildings with flat roof elements, these are generally well designed such that they are in keeping with the pleasant character and appearance of the area.
4. The existing building is part of a semi-detached pair and has been extended with a two-storey rear extension and a single-storey side extension to create an entrance for the dentist practice from High Street. Although the appearance of the building is plain, its form and massing appear in keeping with the character of the area.
5. The proposed single storey extension would have a flat roof that would be set at a higher level than the eaves of pitched roof of the existing extension onto which it would attach. In addition, it would project forward of the existing extension. The juxtaposition of different heights and forms between the

proposed and existing roof would appear awkward and result in the host building having a discordant appearance.

6. Moreover, this awkward relationship would appear prominent from High Street, thereby adversely affecting the character and appearance of the area.
7. Although one wall of the extension would follow the angle of the boundary of the site, a moderate part of the wider site would remain undeveloped such that the building would not appear overly large for the size of the plot. However, the massing and form of the proposal would nonetheless appear incongruous compared with the host building and surrounding area.
8. Consequently, the proposal would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the host building and surrounding area. Therefore, it would conflict with Policy HQ1 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2015 – 2035 July 2021 (LP) which seeks, among other things, that the massing, orientation, and appearance relate well to the existing local surroundings and reinforce local distinctiveness.

Parking provision and highway safety

9. The existing three off-street parking spaces would be retained and reorientated. From the evidence and my observations during the site visit, there would be inadequate space around the proposed parking spaces to allow vehicles to reverse safely out of the spaces or to reverse into the spaces to allow exit from the site in forward gear. Furthermore, there is limited detailed information before me, such as tracking diagrams, to demonstrate that the three parking spaces could be used safely. On this basis, the site could accommodate one parking space at best.
10. There is little information before me with respect to the number of staff on the site at any one time. The proposal would result in a total of four surgeries and would therefore be likely to result in around ten staff members requiring parking spaces as suggested by the Council. Therefore, the shortfall including spaces for patients would be likely to be significant.
11. Although the street outside the site on High Street provides a modest number of unrestricted on-street parking spaces, the availability of these spaces could not be guaranteed. In addition, the opposite side of the street is lined with double yellow lines as is the area near the junction of High Street with The Avenue and Brook Street. There are also some on-street parking spaces on Brook Street and further down High Street. Given the proximity of these spaces to other local services, the availability of these could also not be guaranteed. There is a car park opposite the site. However, there is a time restriction of two hours such that the spaces would not be suitable for use by staff.
12. The nearby unrestricted on-street parking spaces may partially mitigate the shortfall of parking spaces. However, given the shortfall, the proposal could, albeit in a worst-case scenario, result in up to around nine cars being parked on the street in the vicinity of the appeal site. This would lead to increased instances of dangerous and obstructive parking, such as on yellow lines, at road junctions, on footways or across driveways, to the detriment of the free and safe flow of traffic, in particular emergency service vehicles.
13. Consequently, the proposal would not provide adequate parking provision and would lead to an unacceptable impact on highway safety. Therefore, it would

conflict with LP Policy T2 which seeks proposals that do not impede the free flow of traffic on the existing network or create hazards to that traffic and other road users. It would also conflict with the aims of LP Policy T3 which requires that sufficient parking provision is made.

Other Matters

14. I note the evidence regarding alternative designs for the extension. However, I have necessarily assessed the scheme before me.
15. I note the evidence regarding the social benefit associated with the provision of a dental surgery and access for disabled patients. There would be temporary economic benefits during the construction process. However, given that the proposal would provide one dental surgery, I attribute limited weight to these benefits which would not outweigh the significant harm to the character and appearance of the area and the unacceptable impact on highway safety identified above.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above, the proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and in the absence of material considerations to indicate otherwise, the appeal is dismissed.

R Sabu

INSPECTOR