



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 December 2022

by A.Graham BA(hons) MAued IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 February 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/D/22/3306555

7 Priory Close, Harrold, Bedford MK43 7DL

- 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 Robert Hartwell against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref: 22/01646/FUL dated 16 July 2022, was refused by notice dated 5 September 2022.
 - The application is for erection of two storey side and rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the impact of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the area and the impact upon the safe and efficient use of the highway.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a detached, two storey house within what appears to have been a relatively recent infill development located to the edge of the Harrold Conservation Area. Most properties exhibit neo vernacular details of partial dormer windows and chimneys and utilise a good quality brick that appears to match well to the local context.
4. Priory Close itself is a cul de sac with generally open plan frontages. Garaging and parking are provided within a variety of locations that appear to be relatively successful in accommodating vehicles for the different types of properties. At the Appeal site the garage is adjoining the principal building whose primary, asymmetrical frontage faces onto the street. Currently there are some small areas of shrubbery and landscaping to the property's frontage but other than this the plot is open to the street with hardstanding and grass being the dominant materials of the curtilage.
5. To the rear the property has a reasonably sized garden with a rear single storey outshut protruding from the main house and adjoining the garage. This part of the property appears to be original and has a pitched roof and chimney which enable the design of the area to be contextual to its village location. To the rear of the garden the tops of buildings within the Harrold Conservation Area are visible and the boundary of the Conservation Area runs slightly

beyond the rear boundary line of the appeal site. The chimney of the rear single storey element is visible from this part of the Conservation Area as is the rear elevation of the main house.

6. The proposal before me seeks permission for a two storey side extension and first floor extension over the existing garage and the single storey rear projection. The proposed two storey side extension would be constructed over the garage but would protrude forward at first floor level where the ground floor would be used as a car port. The rear first floor extension would see the provision of a master bedroom extending over the entirety of the rear single storey outshut.
7. The proposal would retain the same amount of bedrooms as currently exists but would modify the current parking arrangements through the provision of the first floor frontage extension and associated supporting pier of the proposed car port. The Appellant's contend that sufficient parking would be retained and that three vehicles could be parked within the property curtilage.

Impact of the Proposal Upon the Character and Appearance of the Area.

8. Although the property is not within the Harrold Conservation Area it is adjacent to it and as such there is the potential for the proposal to have an impact upon the historic environment. In assessing this appeal I am therefore firstly required by Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to give 'Special Attention' to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Harrold Conservation Area. This is reflected in The National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework), which states that 'Great Weight' should be given to the heritage assets' conservation.
9. The Harrold Conservation Area appears significant due to its vernacular rural character focussed around High Street that is synonymous with the wider rural character of the area. The village's linear form around High Street, its vernacular cottages and buildings, village green and modest architectural scale all contribute to the significance of the historic environment here.
10. The proposal would enlarge the rear single storey element of the existing house and would remove the chimney which I consider does provide some wider interest to the houses here when seen from the vicinity of Mill House to the rear. Nevertheless, the overall form, scale and design of the proposed rear upward extension would largely be contextual and take its inspiration from traditional gable forms. Even though the extension would be visible from the Conservation Area I consider that the overall design would be appropriate although this would be dependant upon high quality materials being used.
11. Similarly, although the proposed side extension would enlarge the side elevation of the existing property, the simplicity of design would not lead me to conclude that excessive harm would occur to the streetscene of Priory Close or to the setting of the Conservation Area. The set back and set down of the proposed extension would help ensure the dominance of the existing house and as such I consider that the requirements of Policy 28s and 41S of the Bedford Borough Local Plan (2030) and the Harrold Neighbourhood Plan

all of which maintain the intention to respond positively to the character and appearance of the village, would be met.

The Impact of the Proposal Upon the Safe and Efficient Use of the Highway

12. The existing property appears to have enough parking to serve the existing house. Even though I saw on my site visit that the existing garage is modest in scale and would not be overly useable, I consider that there is sufficient parking within the property curtilage to serve the occupant's needs. This is accommodated through one vehicle being able to be parked in front of the existing garage with one, or, perhaps two, vehicles being parked immediately to the front of the principal elevation of the house.
13. I consider therefore that the provision of a parking space to the front of the garage is important, not only due to the ease of using such a parking space, but also due to the fact that parking to the side of the property goes some way to mitigating the overall visible impact of parking within the streetscene.
14. The proposal intends to maintain this space but would construct a first floor extension above the space thereby creating a car port type feature. In order to support the first floor of the extension it would be necessary to construct a supporting pillar to the front corner of the extension. It appears to me that it is this front pillar that would have the greatest effect upon the current parking arrangements.
15. Although space would be maintained here, the presence of the pier would make this it much less attractive for both current and future residents to use. The physical presence of a structure here would therefore enclose this space and would make it more difficult to access or exit a vehicle. It would therefore fail to meet the guidance within the Council's Parking Standards for Sustainable Communities SPD (2014) which requires a width of 3.2m as a minimum. Although the Appellant's have shown that a small car could still use this space, I consider that a vehicle any larger than a small car, would have difficulty using it.
16. As a result, I consider that the proposal would actually make parking a vehicle here much less desirable. This would therefore result in parking to the front of the property which would, in itself, not perhaps be the easiest manoeuvre to undertake, especially if a second car was parked here.
17. I consider therefore that the proposal before me would result in the real risk of parking within the property curtilage being much less attractive for occupants and this would, in turn, likely result in more on street parking. I have evidence before me that such on street parking is an issue locally and especially at peak times in summer or at school pick up times. Indeed, I saw on my site visit that the design of the street is not (perhaps intentionally) designed for parking vehicles upon the road and this too would result in more parking in inappropriate locations.
18. In light of my findings therefore, although it may be physically possible for the required number of vehicles to park within the property curtilage here, I consider that the proposal before me would directly frustrate the ease of use of parking that currently exists. As a result, I consider it highly likely that parking at this property would be dispersed onto the public highway and there could be a real risk to highway safety as a result.

19. As such I consider that the proposal would fail to meet the requirements contained within Policy 31 of the Bedford Borough Local Plan (2030), Policy HARROLD NDP4 (iii) of the Harrold Neighbourhood Development Plan 2020-2030 as well as guidance within the adopted Parking Standards for Sustainable Communities SPD (2014)

Conclusion

20. For the reasons given above, and taking into account of all other matters raised, I dismiss the appeal.

A Graham

INSPECTOR