



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 October 2023

by C Billings BA (Hons), DipTP, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 November 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/B0230/D/23/3325183

27 Blandford Avenue, Luton LU2 7AY

- 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 Umaira Saleem against the decision of Luton Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 23/00369/FULHH, dated 31 March 2023, was refused by notice dated 26 May 2023.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a first floor side and rear and single storey rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I note from the evidence that the appeal proposal is an amended version of a previously refused application for side extensions to the property. I have not been provided with any plans to show or compare the appeal proposal to that previous scheme, therefore I have had limited regard to this in making my decision.
3. The appeal site is not within the Green Belt and therefore the consideration of proportionality based on a mathematical calculation, as set out in the appeal examples provided is not directly of relevance to the appeal proposal.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area.

Reasons

5. The appeal dwelling is a semi-detached two storey property located on the corner of Blandford Avenue and Egdon Drive. Due to its corner location the appeal property is prominent within the street scene.
6. The proposed extensions would be large compared to the original host dwelling. The property has also previously been extended, including single storey extensions to the side and rear that appear to have already doubled the ground floor area of the original property. The existing single storey side extension extends up to the side boundary with Egdon Drive, although has a low lean-to hipped roof, which assists in reducing its prominence in the street scene.
7. The previous extensions and alterations to the host dwelling already create some unbalance to the pair of semi-detached properties, by virtue of their

design and scale. The existing single storey side extension is wider than the single storey garage to the side of 29 Blandford Avenue. Also, the side extension and the front projecting porch on the host dwelling have hipped roof designs, as opposed to a lean-to, end gable design, comparable to the design of the porch and side garage at No 29.

8. The proposed large two-storey side extension would further accentuate the unbalance of the pair of properties. Whilst the design of the two-storey extension includes a set back from the main front elevation of the dwelling and a lower ridge line, that drops down further at the rear over the proposed rear projection, to create subservience to the original host dwelling, these design elements would not significantly reduce the overall scale and mass of the proposed extensions. As a result, the proposed side extensions would not appear ancillary to the original building and would significantly unbalance the symmetry of the pair of semi-detached properties.
9. A number of other semi-detached properties along Blandford Avenue of the same design as the host property, have had two-storey or single storey side extensions which unbalance the semi-detached pairs. However, these are not of the same design and scale as the proposal and are not in a prominent corner location within the street scene. Therefore, these other examples do not significantly influence the proposed development. Due to the scale, design, and location of the proposed side extensions, this would cause considerable unbalance to this pair of semi-detached properties at 27 and 29 Blandford Avenue.
10. The single storey element of the proposed side extension would have a blank side gable extending up to the side plot boundary, with the first-floor element set in slightly further. This end gable and 2-storey element with limited set back from the side boundary, would create dominant and uncharacteristic features in the street scene, which would be particularly notable due to the slight rise in ground levels along Blandford Avenue on approach from the main road.
11. The two-storey side extension at 7 Blandford Avenue is not directly comparable to the appeal site, as this relates to a detached, rather than semi-detached property. Whilst the large side extension at No 7 is prominent in the street scene, due to its scale and corner location, it is set in further from the side site boundary than the appeal proposal, and there is some existing vegetation within the plot, which helps to slightly reduce its prominence in the street scene when viewed from the rear.
12. Also, the side extension to No 7 is not typical of extensions to semi-detached corner plots within the surrounding area, which tend to have greater set in at two-storey level from the side boundary with only single storey elements extending close to the side plot boundary. This typical character is currently evident at the corner plots at both ends of Egdon Drive. The extensions to the side of No 7 do not therefore significantly influence the character of the appeal property and the proposal.
13. The proposed two-storey extension would maintain an appropriate gap to the neighbouring property at the rear in Egdon Drive, comparable to that found elsewhere at the corners of Elgon Drive. However, the proposed two-storey extension would discernibly close in the gap between the host dwelling and the property on the opposing corner of Egdon Drive and Blandford Avenue (No 25

Blandford Avenue), reducing the pleasant spacious feel to this part of the street scene, and replicating the less successful character and appearance created to the side of No 7 Blandford Avenue and its opposing corner plot.

14. Whilst the proposed external materials of the extensions would be in keeping with that of the host dwelling, this would not overcome the harm caused by the scale and mass of the proposed side extension and resultant undue prominence it would create within the street scene.
15. Having regard to the above, the proposed extensions would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area, in conflict with Policies LLP1, LLP19 and LLP25 of the Luton Local Plan (LLP) which, amongst other matters, require development to respect the character of an area. Furthermore, there would be conflict with Policy LLP19 of the LLP which requires extensions to dwellings to be of ancillary scale to the original building and protect prevailing gaps and spaces between dwellings, especially in areas of spacious character.

Other Matters

16. The proposed extensions would provide more space for the occupiers of the dwelling however, the existing property is of reasonable scale and, I do not have any substantial evidence to demonstrate that the existing accommodation is substandard to meet the general needs of its occupants. Also, I can only consider the merits of the appeal proposal and not the merits of any alternative potential scheme.
17. By virtue of the proposed separation distances and position of proposed windows in the extensions in relation to neighbouring properties, there would be no harm caused to the living conditions of occupiers of neighbouring dwellings. The proposed access and parking arrangements for the proposed extended dwelling would remain as existing and, I have no evidence to show this would not be acceptable nor cause harm to highway safety. However, these positive considerations would not outweigh the harm identified above, in relation to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

C Billings
INSPECTOR