
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 November 2023

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24.11.2023

Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/D/23/3329472

61 Village Road, Bromham, Bedford MK43 8JP

- 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 and Ms Barrett and Sacco against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 23/00686/FUL, dated 27 March 2023, was refused by notice dated 21 July 2023.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a 2-storey front extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural and preliminary matters

2. The description of development given in the above heading is taken from the application form lodged with the Council. It was, however, amended prior to determination to additionally refer to a vehicle crossover. I have assessed the appeal scheme on that basis.
3. The submitted plans show roof lights on the existing garage that were absent at my site visit. The Council has also referred to this discrepancy. The application form and decision notice do not refer to these roof lights nor does the site notice. Therefore, I have not considered these roof lights to be part of the proposal.
4. The appeal property is adjacent to the Bromham CVP School and Schoolhouse, which is a Grade II listed building. I have had special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses as required by section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Main issues

5. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development firstly, on the character and appearance of the host building and the local area; and secondly, on the setting of the Bromham CVP School and Schoolhouse.

Reasons

Character and appearance

6. The appeal property is a 2-storey detached dwelling of individual design that is set back from the road within an area of mixed character. A 2-storey double

garage projects at right angles forward of the main house with a gable end that faces the road. The proposal is a 2-storey extension to this garage using external materials to match those of the existing building.

7. With a ridgeline and eaves set noticeably lower than those of the host building, the proposal aims to demonstrate subservience, which is referred to in Design Code E1 of the Council's Supplementary Design Guidance, *Residential Extensions, New Dwellings and Small Infill Developments* (SPG). However, the irregular stepped profile to the rooflines across the existing and new garages and the existing link to the main house would appear disjointed. The introduction of part hipped ends to the proposed roof, which is not a feature of the existing building, would also be contrived. Furthermore, by introducing additional built form to one side of the main house and beyond the width of the existing garage, the proposal would further unbalance the front elevation of the dwelling. The main outcome would be a cumbersome and unconvincing enlargement of the existing building that would spoil its intrinsic character.
8. A substantial new 2-storey built form would be introduced into generally undeveloped space that makes a significant and positive contribution to the street scene and the local area. It does so by adding to a sense of openness between the existing building and the road notwithstanding the partial enclosure of the site by existing vegetation. It also establishes a clear visual break between the existing built form and the road. Having carefully viewed the site from numerous public vantage points along Village Road, I have little doubt that the proposed development would curtail views into and across the site and unduly erode the sense of space in the local street scene.
9. I appreciate that there is an eclectic mix of buildings in the local area and that the pattern of existing development is varied, in which buildings are sited differently within their plots with some closer to the road than others. However, it is within a short section of Village Road that the proposed extension would be mainly visually 'read'. In that context, the proposal would draw the eye as an incongruous and visually disruptive feature in the street scene. It would be an unwelcome addition to the local area.

Setting of the listed building

10. By forming part of the space to one side of the School and Schoolhouse, the site forms part of the setting to this listed building. To my mind, the significance of this building as a designated heritage asset is partly derived from its distinctive style with architectural features, which include local stone walls, tall prominent gables, an inscribed bargeboard, large feature windows and gabled dormers, all of which are evident from the road.
11. Unlike the flank wall of the existing garage, which broadly aligns with the main front wall of the School and Schoolhouse, the proposal would stand noticeably closer to the road and forward of this adjacent listed building. In doing so, the proposal would have an unduly imposing presence in the foreground or just beyond the listed building depending on the direction of view. When seen on the immediate approach to the site along Village Road from the north and the entrance to the car park adjacent to the site, the proposal would also curtail views of the School and Schoolhouse. As such, it would constitute an overly dominant form of new development that would visually compete with and thus detract from the setting of the listed building. The significance of the School

and Schoolhouse as a designated heritage asset would be significantly diminished as a result.

12. In reaching this conclusion, I acknowledge that off-road vehicle parking and some existing buildings along Village Road contribute little positively to the wider setting of the School and Schoolhouse. I also saw that the forecourt area to the School was well used for vehicle parking, the effect of which visually dominates the building's frontage to the road. Nevertheless, it seems to me that additional harm cannot be justified solely on the basis that some harm already exists.
13. The use of the new garage could reduce the need to park vehicles in front of the main house that in turn would improve the setting of the listed building. However, sufficient space would remain on the driveway for vehicle parking even with the new extension in place. Consequently, this benefit is not one that would necessarily materialise if planning permission were to be granted.
14. Views of the proposal from public vantage points would be partly screened by existing vegetation within and just beyond the site. While this greenery would heavily filter views of the appeal scheme from the road, planting can be cut back or removed at any time. Consequently, soft landscaping cannot generally be relied on to effectively shield the proposal in the public domain. In any event, the proposed extension and its uneasy relationship with the School and Schoolhouse would be readily evident from Village Road just in front of the open driveway to the site.
15. The harm caused by the proposal on the significance of the listed building would be less than substantial. In those circumstances, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Policy 41S of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 (LP) echoes this requirement. The additional accommodation provided within the extension and the opportunity to store historic cars would largely amount to private benefits. No public benefits would outweigh the identified harm.

Conclusion on the main issues

16. On the main issues, I conclude that the proposed development would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the host building, the local area and the setting of a listed building. Accordingly, it conflicts with LP Policies 28S, 29, 30 and 41S and SPG Design Codes E1, E2 and E3. These policies and guidance aim to ensure that development achieves the highest design quality; integrates well and contributes positively to the character of the area; and protects if not enhances heritage assets and their settings.
17. The appeal scheme is also at odds with the statutory duty and the policies of the Framework. These policies state that new development should add to the overall quality of an area, be sympathetic to local character, and safeguard heritage assets.

Other matters

18. The finished dwelling would continue to sit within a good-sized plot and so it would not constitute over development of the site. Once complete, the new extension would provide an additional bathroom and walk-in wardrobe as well

as extra space to store cars. However, these considerations do not outweigh the significant harm that I have identified in relation to the main issues.

19. The Council appears to raise no objection to an extended vehicle crossover along the highway frontage of the site subject to conditions. However, few details of this proposal such as the width of the dropped kerb and the visibility of other road users have been provided. I have carefully considered whether conditions could be imposed to require the Council's approval of such information if planning permission were to be granted. However, the acceptability of this element of the appeal scheme is partly dependent on the outcome of that assessment. As such, it would be inappropriate to impose such conditions at this stage. Therefore, I have not issued a split decision that grants planning permission solely for the crossover.

Conclusion

20. Overall, the proposed development would conflict with the development plan, when read as a whole. There are no material considerations, including the policies of the Framework, which indicate that the decision should be taken other than in accordance with the development plan.
21. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR