



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 December 2023

by Sian Griffiths BSc(Hons) DipTP MScRealEst MRTPI MRICS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 January 2024.

Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/D/23/3330519

64 Church Street, Clifton, Shefford SG17 5EY

- 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 Mrs Waters against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - The application Ref CB/23/01902/FULL, dated 6 June 2023, was refused by notice dated 25 August 2023.
 - The development proposed is two storey side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Government published on 19 December 2023 a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Neither the appellant nor the Council have made any further submissions regarding the revised Framework, and I am satisfied that any references made to the revised Framework within this decision would not be unreasonable to the parties.

Reasons

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposals on the character and appearance of the area and the Clifton Conservation Area.
4. Having regard to my duty under s72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.
5. Church Street is a quiet village road which provides access to several small residential developments along its length. Much of the eastern side is included in the Clifton Conservation Area which, in this location, is characterized by cottages and narrow-gabled, converted agricultural buildings with clay tile roofs and dark timber weatherboarding.
6. At the eastern end, some of the buildings are set around informal open green spaces fringed by trees which add to the open, rural feel. The nearest listed building (Grade II) Clifton Farmhouse is partly screened by a converted farm group (Clifton Farm Barns), which are also curtilage listed. These form the boundary to the conservation area, just to the south and east of the appeal property.

7. The appeal property (No64) forms part of an attractive new development of large, detached houses adjacent to the Clifton Conservation Area. The property is also located in close proximity to Grade II Listed Clifton Farmhouse, which falls within the conservation area, albeit the council did not identify harm to the setting of the farmhouse in their decision.
8. Like its neighbours, No64 has a bespoke, traditional design which echoes the strong rural vernacular of the wider area. It is barn-like in its dimensions and has several features seen on many historic agricultural buildings including rooflight windows, double height openings and half brick and timber cladding. The southern gable has been designed with a small double height bay projection providing side access and a porch, which successfully breaks up the massing of this part of the building.
9. The existing dwelling, in my view, sympathetically fits into the setting of the conservation area, without detracting from it, allowing the significance of the conservation area to be appreciated, partly because of the separation it has to the conservation area boundary.
10. The proposed extension would be two storey and extend the existing ridge line of the host dwelling. The forward projection would have a lower ridge line where the appellant revised plans during the determination of the application. The proposed extension would run almost to the existing boundary with the edge of the highway, being (at its closest point) some 20cm away. The overall effect would be of the host dwelling changing from being an 'L' shape to a 'U' shape. The appellant has set out in their statement that the proposal would represent an additional 47% (approx.) of the internal floorspace being added on the ground and first floor and they acknowledge that this would be a 'generous enlargement' (para 6.7).
11. Overall, I agree with the council that the proposed extension would result in a highly visible development that would be disproportionate to the host dwelling and viewed against the backdrop of the more modest neighbouring farm group at Clifton Farm Barns. The size of the extension and proximity to the boundary would also create greater enclosure, which would also be harmful to the more open character of the development at this end of the village.
12. I note that the appellants have endeavoured to reduce the scale of the proposals by reducing the ridge of the projecting front gable, but I do not consider the resulting scheme would be sufficiently subservient. This would result in harm to the character of the host dwelling and wider area as well as harm to the setting of the conservation area, albeit less than substantial.
13. Para 208 of the Framework sets out that '*Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal*'. I do not consider there would be public benefits associated with the proposed development.
14. I therefore find the proposals would offend Policy HQ1 (High Quality Development) of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (2021) (LP) which requires development proposals (including extensions) to enhance or reinforce the local distinctiveness of the area. I also consider the proposals would be contrary to Policy HE3 (Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Built Heritage) of the LP which requires development proposals which affect designated

heritage assets will be expected to preserve, sustain and enhance their special character and historic significance. Nor do I consider the proposals would be aligned to the relevant parts of the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide (2014) (SPD) which places '*great emphasis on the need for new development to be of the highest possible quality, ensuring that the places created now provide a lasting legacy and are locally distinctive.*'

Conclusions

15. For the reasons given and having considered all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

Sian Griffiths

INSPECTOR