



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 August 2024

by Eleni Randle BSc (hons) MSc FRICS FAAV MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2nd September 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/D/24/3343030

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 & Mrs P & L Barrett and Sacco against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application reference is 24/00275/FUL.
 - The development proposed is single storey front/side extension to form garage/storage and vehicle crossover.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. I have utilised the Council's description of the development as per the decision notice as I feel it more concisely describes the development.
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 within their delegated report. Despite this, and the comments from the Council regarding potential for regularisation, the application form, decision notice and the site notice do not refer to these roof lights. On this basis I have not considered these roof lights to be part of the proposal.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are the impact of the proposal upon
 - i) the setting of a listed building, and
 - ii) the character and quality of the area and the host dwelling.

Reasons

Setting of a listed building

5. The appeal site is adjacent to the Bromham CVP School and Schoolhouse, which is a Grade II Listed building. In accordance with Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 special regard should be had to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. The appeal site is two storey, detached dwelling. The proposal before me seeks to construct a single storey front/side extension in order to form a garage/storage area utilising external materials which, according to the application form, would match the existing dwelling.

6. The property benefits from an existing two storey double garage which projects, at a right angle, forward of the front elevation of the host dwelling with a gable end facing towards Village Road. The existing garage is slightly forward of the projecting front gable of the adjacent School and Schoolhouse, however, in overall views is fair to consider that it is generally viewed as being approximately in line with the prevailing building lines along this section of Village Road. The proposed garage extension would extend built form, at the appeal site, forward of the existing building line by in the region of 6.4 metres.
7. At the time of my site visit, I found that views of the appeal proposal would generally be limited when approaching from the north looking towards the adjacent listed building. Despite this I find that the proposal would be in a highly prominent location when approaching from the south where it would be seen, due to the projection forward of the building line by several metres, in views alongside the adjacent listed building. The proposal would also be highly visible within the context of the immediate street scene from around the nearby crossing as well as within the car park, opposite, which serves Bromham Baptist Church.
8. The proposal would be located adjacent to the northern boundary which is acknowledged to provide a degree of physical separation between that and the heritage asset in question, however, building forward of the prevailing building line towards the front boundary would result in an unsympathetic elevation with two further garage doors facing towards the heritage asset. The proposal would stand noticeably forward, albeit at single storey, of the adjacent listed building and would have a distracting presence in the foreground as result of the cumulative footprint of garaging/storage to the front of the appeal site and I find that this would impact upon the significance of the School and Schoolhouse as a designated heritage asset resulting in less than substantial harm to that asset.
9. The proposed extension would, as noted by the previous Inspector for this site (albeit that is noted to have concerned a two-storey extension) would result in an uneasy relationship with the School and Schoolhouse and, in this case, I find this would be as a result of the appeal site appearing as a form of wrap around development compared to, and within the context of, the heritage asset which would be readily evident within views from the public domain. Whilst I do not find that the proposal would necessarily curtail views of the School and the Schoolhouse, when seen on the immediate approach from the north, I do find that the proposal would still constitute an overly prominent and dominant form of new development which would visually compete and thus detract from the setting of the listed building, and how it is viewed, from the surrounding viewpoints noted above within the street scene.
10. Whilst the proposal would be set back from the highway itself and whilst I acknowledge the scale and height at single storey, the proposal would, as can be seen from the submitted plans, be sited notably forward of an established building line within which the proposal would be viewed within the street scene. Based upon my finding that the proposal would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the listed building, as a designated heritage asset, in accordance with paragraph 208 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (the Framework) 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 including, where appropriate, securing its optimal viable use.

11. The proposal would provide the appellant opportunity for parking of classic cars within the proposed garaging; however, this would essentially amount to a private benefit with no public benefits existing, in the evidence before me, that would outweigh the harm which I have identified to the designated heritage asset. Sufficient space would remain on the driveway for vehicle parking even with the proposal having been constructed. As a result of this, this benefit is not one that would necessarily materialise if planning permission were to be granted and nor could it, for example, be secured by condition to ensure the improvements stated to be a benefit of the proposals within the appellant's statement of case.
12. The proposal would be contrary to Bedford Borough Council Local Plan 2030 (LP) Policy 29 which requires development to protect and where appropriate, enhance heritage assets and their settings and successfully integrate with the historic environment and character and LP Policy 41S which requires proposals leading to less than substantial harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, including securing its optimal viable use in a similar fashion to as outlined above within the context of the Framework.

Character and quality of the area and the host dwelling

13. As previously noted, in the context of first main issue, the building line along this section of Village Road is broadly consistent with the existing double garage at the appeal site being approximately in line, and only slightly forward of, the projecting front gable of the adjacent School and Schoolhouse and the prevailing building lines of 55 and 57 Village Road respectively. The proposal would extend built form forward of the existing building line by in the region of 6.4 metres. Whilst I do acknowledge the step down from the ridge of the host dwelling, as well as subservience to the host dwelling itself, the context of spaciousness around the host dwelling within the plot is created by a lack of built form (regardless of the existing hardstanding for vehicle parking).
14. The appeal site is noted to be located within an area which is mixed in terms of character and overall design of dwellings and buildings within the vicinity, however, the proposal would introduce additional built form forward of one side of the main house, at a width greater than the existing garage, which I find would unbalance the front elevation for the dwelling. Even as single storey, I find the proposal would be an incongruous feature in a prominent location forward of the building line. Built form would be introduced into a currently undeveloped space which I find contributes positively to the street scene as a result of a lack of built form between the existing building and the road which results in a clear visual break between the existing built form and the road/ This was also previously noted by another Inspector.
15. Whilst, in this case, the proposal would not necessarily curtail views into and across the site as a result of being single storey, I still find it would unduly erode the sense of space in the local street scene as a result of introduction of built form which would be notably forward of the existing garage and overall building line. Whilst the plot is, overall, large the volume of built form to the front of the site I find would result in visual overdevelopment and would result

- in built form which would be uncharacteristically close to both the road and front boundary when compared to surrounding development and built form.
16. The proposal would be subservient to the main house, in basic spatial terms but within a consideration of the site context I find that the proposal would fail to enhance the character and quality of the area. It should be kept in mind that character and appearance are separate matters with the character being the intrinsic qualities of the area which, in this case, I find to be an absence of built form and the presence of a consistent a building line along this section of the road, within which the proposal would be viewed.
 17. The proposal would be contrary to LP Policy 28S which requires proposals to be high quality in terms of design and to promote local distinctiveness, to have a positive relationship with the surrounding areas, integrating well and complementing the character of the area in which the development is located and, to take a proactive approach to sustaining and, where appropriate, enhancing the historic environment. The proposal would also be contrary to LP Policy 29 which requires proposals to be of the highest design quality and contribute positively to the areas character and identity, respect the context within which it will sit and also to protect and where appropriate enhance heritage assets and their settings and successfully integrate with the historic environment and character.
 18. I note the appellant's contention that Supplementary Planning Document "RENSID" should not carry any weight as a result of the design codes, providing guidance for extensions, as a result of being an amplification of policies set out in a deposit draft of the Local Plan with specific reference to Policy H29. I acknowledge that Policy H29 has been superseded by the newly adopted LP (adopted 2020), however I do not find that this necessarily means that the design codes in question automatically carry no weight at all.
 19. The design codes are designed to provide design guidance appropriate to most situations in relation to extensions with specific regard to basic shape and scale, detailed character and space around building. The overarching objective of this guidance is still, therefore, applicable to the relevant policies in the newly adopted LP. Even if I had attributed no weight, or even limited weight, to the design codes (E1 to E3 (inclusive)) the appeal would still have failed due to the conflict which I have identified against the main policies of the LP, which are the starting point for determination, as well as the impact I have identified as to the significance of a heritage asset.

Other Matters

20. As within the previous appeal at this site, the Council does not raise objection to an extended vehicle crossover along the highway frontage of the site subject to conditions which are set out within their appeal questionnaire. I note that it has been suggested that a pre-commencement condition could be utilised prior to the development of the extended crossover and, with this in place, the Council consider that the impact on car parking provision and highway safety is acceptable and not adversely affected by the proposal for the extended crossover in question.
21. Despite this, I note that this exact same issue was raised within the previous appeal with the Inspector in that case specifically not issuing a split decision that granted planning permission solely for the crossover in question due to the

acceptability of this element of the appeal scheme being partly dependant on the outcome of that assessment (the width of the drop kerb and the visibility of other road users/visibility splays etc). I too have considered whether such conditions could be imposed to require Council's approval of such information if planning permission were to be granted for the crossover within a split decision, however, the acceptability of this element is still dependent on the outcome of such assessments in principle.

22. I find that such details should, therefore, have been submitted as part of the revised scheme to avoid the same situation arising at appeal stage. On this basis, I have not, therefore, issued a split decision that grants planning permission solely for the crossover as I find that the additional information, previously advised at appeal as being required, is intrinsically linked to the acceptability of the proposal and that this should be provided at the point of determination rather than being secured by condition at this stage.

Conclusion

23. For the reasons outlined above, and taking account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Eleni Randle

INSPECTOR