



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/P0240/D/24/3346012

50 Sutton Mill Road, Potton, Central Bedfordshire, SG19 2QB

- 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 Hutchinson against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - The application reference is CB/24/00313/FULL.
 - The development proposed is first floor extension over existing utility and study.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the impact of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a large detached two storey dwelling which, according to the Council's delegated report and relevant planning history, has previously been extended. The site stands within the settlement envelope of Potton where it is set back from the road frontage of Sutton Mill Road in line with the adjacent property, 48 Sutton Mill Road (no. 48). I note that Sutton Mill Road is also a Bridleway and is stated to form part of the recreational route known as Potton Green Wheel and, during my site visit, I noted walkers on the Public Right of Way approaching from south where the road becomes more akin to an unsurfaced farm track. Despite the setback from Sutton Mill Road itself the appeal site, and the siting of the proposed extension, would be clearly visible in views from Sutton Mill Road across the front garden/driveway of no. 48 and through the driveway gates of the appeal site itself.
4. Sutton Mill Road, in general terms, is not characterised by a particular type, or style, of dwelling. Despite this, at the time of my site visit I found that the appeal site and adjacent dwelling, no. 48, are of a similar siting and style and that they share similar characteristics such as separation by single storey pitched roof elements. Whilst I acknowledge that the properties in question are finished in differing materials and the appeal property has already been extended, I find that the similarities between the two are notable within general views of the street scene creating visual cohesion with neither property visually competing with the other.
5. The proposed extension would project forward of the existing main two storey front elevation over the existing ground floor projection and would be the same

height as the host dwelling. The proposal has been designed as a two-storey gable end which, in terms of bulk scale and massing, would fail to be subservient with the host dwelling and would dominate the appearance of the appeal site. The extension is such that it would require an enlargement, albeit minor, of the ridge height of the host property itself to accommodate the proposals. The gable feature would, in this case, project forward and I find that it would alter the primacy of the existing front elevation as a result of projection forward which would be seen prominently, compared to the existing front elevation, in views when approaching the appeal site from the north.

6. The host dwelling may not have any historical or particularly special architectural merit and whilst there is not necessarily any requirement for its exact appearance to be preserved, it is well established, in principle, that extensions should be designed in a manner which does not dominate the host dwelling. In addition, they should be sympathetic to the context of the site in terms of scale and positioning to ensure that the development results in a balanced appearance which is appropriate when viewed within the wider street scene.
7. The proposal before me would not make a positive contribution to the street scene, even with the acknowledged variation in property types, as a result of a dominant appearance to both the host dwelling as well as within the context of the character and appearance of the area. The bulk, scale, and massing projecting forward of the existing front elevation of the host dwelling would appear visually inappropriate and too strong a visual contrast to the adjacent property with which the appeal site is immediately viewed. This would, therefore, contribute to a dominant and alien extension that would be highly visible from Sutton Mill Road for its users of the road and right of way.
8. I note that the Tree Officer has outlined the role of the existing boundary trees with regards to visual impact of the proposed development from the street scene. Whilst I note the presence of trees to the front of the appeal site boundary, and the existing boundary treatment, I do not find that they would assist in mitigating the impact of the proposal in views on the approach from the north along Sutton Mill Road as previously identified. Notwithstanding this, it should be kept in mind that character and appearance are separate matters with appearance being the visual qualities whereas character is the intrinsic qualities of an area which, in this case, I find to be as a result of the visual cohesion and design similarity between the appeal site and no. 48.
9. I note that the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide 2023 (the Design Guide) is intended to be, and should be applied as, guidance. Within the Design Guide it is acknowledged that the success of an extension will generally be determined by its relationship to the existing property and that the existing buildings should not be dominated by extension as the character of the existing building could be lost. The approach should be that the extension is designed as an addition, and it should be subservient forming a 'supporting' role to the host dwelling. Small additions may be permissible but should generally echo the style of the house and neighbouring properties to ensure that proposals have no significant impact upon the street scene.
10. Whilst, evidently, the proposal would not result in the proposal of the nature demonstrated in the figure 310 of the Design Guide its overarching objective, and design principles, are clear in that extensions should not dominate nor

have negative impact upon the character and appearance of the area. Based upon my findings, and for the reasons outlined above, I find that the proposal before me is contrary to the overarching objectives of the Design Guide in relation to both the host dwelling itself but also within the street scene resulting in harmful impact on the character and appearance of the area which is sufficient to warrant refusal. Overall, I find that there is demonstrable harm to the character and appearance of the area and the streetscape as a result of the proposal given full consideration to the site context.

11. The proposal would be contrary to Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2021 Policy HQ1 which requires that proposals should take account of opportunities to enhance or reinforce the local distinctiveness of the area as well as that size, scale, massing, and appearance relate well to the existing local surroundings and reinforce local distinctiveness, both built and natural. The proposal would also be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 paragraphs 135 a) which requires developments to function well and add to the overall quality of the area, 135 c) which requires development to be sympathetic to local character including the surrounding built environment as well as 135 d) which seeks to establish or maintain a strong sense of place using the arrangements of streets, spaces and building types.

Other Matters

12. The Design and Access statement, for the original application, is noted to refer to an extended property in Biggleswade which is noted within the Council's Delegated Report. Within the appellant's Design and Access statement, a photograph of the property, stated to be in Biggleswade, is provided on the basis that it has similar orientation and has gained approval for a similar looking application. No further details such as details of the approved plans, existing plans or site context have been provided, however, based upon the information before me, I do not consider that the proposal is comparable to that which is before me in terms of the visual relationship with the adjacent property at no. 48 nor the design of the proposals. Each case should be considered on its own merits.
13. A lack of objection, from the Town Council and the neighbouring property (in the case of this resubmission), is acknowledged but is a neutral consideration. I acknowledge neighbour support stated to have been provided, within the Design and Access Statement, in response to the first application but this does not overcome the concerns I have found for the reasons set out within the main body of this decision letter.

Conclusion

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

Eleni Randle

INSPECTOR