



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 January 2018

by Chris Forrett BSc(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14th March 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/W/17/3180695

56b Castle Road, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK40 3PJ

- 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 Steve Richardson against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 17/01026/FUL, dated 6 April 2017, was refused by notice dated 31 May 2017.
 - The development proposed is alterations to the existing roof, comprising the construction of a rear dormer, together with the insertion of two rooflights in the front elevation (amended scheme).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Bedford Conservation Area (BCA).

Reasons

3. The appeal site is situated on the north side of Castle Road and consists of a first floor flat, which itself forms part of a semi-detached Victorian property. The site is located within the BCA (and in particular sub-area 13 : Rothsay). The Bedford Character Area Appraisal (BCAA) identifies Castle Road as a secondary street where the properties exhibit a less spacious character than Rothsay Road and Bushmead Avenue which are two key roads in the sub area. Notwithstanding that, the appeal building (along with the majority of buildings in the sub area) are identified as buildings of positive merit/retaining residual value in the BCAA.
4. The proposed development includes a box dormer to the rear roofslope and two rooflights to the frontage. To my mind, the box dormer would be a bulky addition to the roofslope and would not respect the character of the host property appearing as an inappropriate addition.
5. Furthermore, the dormer would be of a contemporary design and include a substantial amount of glazing, albeit broken up by an openable timber panel. The amount of glazing, and the timber panel, would appear out of character with the traditional Victorian appearance of the host building which further add to the overall harm to the appearance of the host building and the BCA.

6. In coming to that view, I acknowledge that the dormer would not be readily visible from public vantage points. However, it would be visible from the rear of several other properties.
7. The Appellant has drawn my attention to bullet point (v) of Policy BE11 of the Bedford Borough Local Plan (2002) (LP) which includes the consideration of the development on the roofscape. Whilst the Council have not specifically referred to this element of the policy it is clear that the development would have a harmful impact on the roofscape of the host building.
8. My attention has been drawn to a recent planning permission¹ at the site which included roof lights on the front elevation and an alternative design for the rear dormer. From the evidence before me the design of that dormer window gave the impression of two smaller dormers, albeit with a box element in between. It is clear that this development represents a fallback position. However, the design of the rear dormer is more in character with the host building than the current appeal proposal.
9. Paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that where a development would 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.
10. Whilst few benefits of the development have been identified, the provision of an additional bedroom for the flat could be considered to be a public benefit. However, such a benefit is clearly very modest.
11. I have also considered the fallback position which would result in the development of a dormer window in the rear roofslope which would also change the appearance of the host building. However, the fallback development does not have the same degree of harm to the BCA as the appeal development.
12. Taking all of these factors into account, whilst the harm to the significance of the heritage assets would be less than substantial, the public benefits are not sufficient to outweigh the harm I have identified.
13. In addition to the above, both main parties have referred me to a recent appeal decision for a property on Rothsay Place². This decision related to a pitched roof dormer at a care home and is materially different to the proposal before me. Moreover, each application must be assessed on its individual merits.
14. Turning to the proposed rooflights on the front elevation of the building, it is noted that the previous planning permission also included two rooflights on the front elevation. The Council have not raised any objections to the ones proposed in the current scheme and I have no reason to disagree with that view.
15. For the above reasons the proposal would harm the character of the host property and the Conservation Area contrary to Policies CP21 and CP23 of the Bedford Borough Council Core Strategy & Rural Issues Plan (2008); and Policies BE9 and BE11 of the LP which amongst other matters seek to preserve or enhance the character of Conservation Areas.

¹ Reference 16/00856/FUL

² APP/K0235/W/17/3167395

Conclusion

16. Taking all matters into consideration, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Chris Forrett

INSPECTOR