
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 January 2021

by Andrew Smith BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 January 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/W/20/3260760

48 Garfield Street, Bedford MK41 7RZ

- 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 D Milazzo against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/01002/FUL, dated 18 May 2020, was refused by notice dated 10 July 2020.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing water storage building and erection of a single storey dwelling (resubmission of 19/02769/FUL).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - The effect upon highway safety, having particular regard to intended parking arrangements;
 - Whether or not acceptable living conditions for any future residential occupier of the proposed dwelling would be created, having particular regard to the intended internal living arrangements and the makeup of the site's external areas;
 - The effect upon the living conditions of existing residential occupiers at the site known as No 48 Garfield Street (No 48), having particular regard to the intended makeup of the site's external areas.

Reasons

Highway safety

3. Garfield Street (the Street) is compactly developed and properties are, for the most part, comprised of terraced residential dwellings. Upon inspection I witnessed on-street parking to be in high demand. Indeed, only a limited number of available spaces could be observed along the entirety of the Street's length. Whilst my single visit to the site cannot be relied upon to provide an entirely accurate account of day-to-day parking arrangements, it is realistic to anticipate that the Street is often heavily parked. This is particularly so when noting the urban location, the high number of properties served and the unrestricted nature of on-street parking opportunities.

4. The Council's residential parking standards, as set out in the Parking Standards for Sustainable Communities Supplementary Planning Document (2014), require a minimum of one space per one-bedroom dwelling to be provided. Contrary to this relevant standard, the proposed dwelling would not be supported by any on-site parking provision.
5. The proposal would result in the loss of existing commercial floor space due to the intended demolition of outbuildings/built elements, the largest of which is currently used to house water storage tanks in association with a launderette use that occupies No 48 at ground floor. As this outbuilding serves merely an ancillary storage function, its realistic potential to generate parking requirements is minimal. Indeed, the intended demolitions would not off-set the level of demand for parking that would realistically be anticipated to be generated by the introduction of a new dwelling.
6. The additional and uncatered for demand for parking generated by the proposal would, given the site circumstances to hand, be likely to promote instances of inappropriate parking on the public highway to the detriment of the free flow of traffic and highway safety. I thus identify harm. The proposal conflicts with Policy 31 of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 (adopted January 2020) (the Local Plan) in so far as this policy requires that particular attention be given to highway capacity, parking provision and safety.

Living conditions – future occupiers

7. The proposed single-storey dwelling would provide an open-plan living area (incorporating cooking and sleeping facilities) and an individually partitioned shower room. The dwelling would be served by its own private external amenity area, which would come in to being following the intended relocation of staircase access serving the upper floor flat at No 48.
8. It is the case that combined sleeping, cooking and general day-to-day living requirements would predominantly be confined to a single room of relatively modest expanse. Indeed, the proposed floor plan indicates constrained internal arrangements that would provide living conditions of an unduly restricted nature and poor standard for any future occupier.
9. Non-compliance with the Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard (March 2015) (the space standards) has been identified by the Council. This is on the basis that the dwelling's gross internal floor area would fall below the space standards' minimum requirement for a one person, one-bedroom dwelling. Although not determinative, the space standards are a material consideration and provide a useful reference point when assessing the suitability of proposals for new housing.
10. Examples from elsewhere within the Borough where planning permission has been granted for flats or apartments with small internal areas have been referred to by the appellant. However, the full details (including of the floor plans approved) have not been provided and it is thus difficult to draw direct comparisons with the scheme that is before me. In any event, I must consider the proposal upon its own individual merits in recognition that Policy 30 of the Local Plan does not specify a minimum internal floor area standard.
11. I am satisfied that the proposed external space to serve the new dwelling would be suitably laid out to provide a meaningfully sized and readily useable

amenity space for any future occupier of the dwelling. Nevertheless, this does not alter my finding that the proposed internal living arrangements would be unduly constrained and of a poor standard.

12. For the above reasons, having particular regard to the intended internal living arrangements, unacceptable living conditions for any future residential occupier of the proposed dwelling would be created. The proposal would thus cause harm and conflicts with Policy 30 of the Local Plan and with the National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019) (the Framework) in so far as these policies require particular attention to be given to the quality of the development and that planning decisions should promote health and well-being and a high standard of amenity.

Living conditions – existing occupiers

13. The proposal would influence the way in which existing occupiers of the upper-floor flat at No 48 would attain access. Indeed, no longer would occupiers potentially have access to external areas laid out to the rear of the laundrette. Nevertheless, a modestly sized area to the side of No 48 would remain accessible and useable by occupiers of the existing flat. The external space in question would also accommodate shared bin storage facilities.
14. It would not be unusual for flatted accommodation to be served by a limited extent of external space (even if on a semi-private basis such as is intended). In this context and noting that a useable external area would be provided, I am satisfied that the proposal would have an acceptable effect upon the living conditions of existing residential occupiers at the site known as No 48 Garfield Street having particular regard to the intended makeup of the site's external areas. This element of the proposal accords with Policy 30 of the Local Plan in so far as this policy requires particular attention to be given to the relationship of the development with the context in which it is placed.

Other Matters

15. In terms of the scheme's benefits, an additional residential unit is proposed, and the Framework reaffirms the Government's objectives of significantly boosting the supply of homes and making effective use of land. Nevertheless, notwithstanding that a small single-storey dwelling would likely cater for unmet demand, the provision of a single additional unit would not make a noticeable difference to the Borough-wide housing supply situation and is a benefit that attracts limited weight.
16. The scheme's benefits would not outweigh the harms and associated policy conflicts that I have identified. The proposal conflicts with the development plan when read as a whole, and material considerations do not lead me to a decision otherwise.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

Andrew Smith

INSPECTOR