



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 May 2022

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25TH May 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/D/22/3293874

6 Silver Street, Stevington, Bedford MK43 7QP

- 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 Nick Finch against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/01524/FUL, dated 25 May 2021, was refused by notice dated 8 December 2021.
 - The development proposed is the removal of the existing single storey extensions and the construction of new two storey and single storey rear extensions.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and the area, including whether or not it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Stevington Conservation Area, and its effect on the setting of a listed building.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that, in respect of development affecting conservation areas, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing their character or appearance. Section 66(1) requires that special regard shall be paid to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
4. The National Planning Policy Framework ('Framework') sets out that harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, such as a conservation area or a listed building, should require clear and convincing justification.
5. Policies 29 and 41S of the Bedford Local Plan 2030 (adopted 2020) ('BLP') require development to protect and where appropriate enhance heritage assets, and set out features and aspects which may contribute to their significance. These policies therefore reflect the statutory tests and are consistent with the Framework's approach.
6. The Stevington Conservation Area ('SCA') broadly encompasses the historic core of the village, comprising buildings arranged in a linear fashion either side

of Silver Street and Church Road. The properties here are mostly sited close to the highway, giving the area an enclosed, intimate feel and a tight development grain. The main buildings typically have steeply pitched roofs which are finished in variety of materials such as plain tiles, pantiles, slate or thatch, and with exterior walls of red brick, stone or painted render. Many have subordinate extensions or outbuildings to the rear.

7. The two storey part of the host property ('the main building') is finished with red brick of varying hues, and plain tiles on its steeply sloping gabled roof. It has a two storey hipped roof rear extension, which I understand dates from 2004, and which is finished in very uniform brickwork ('existing extension'), and thus contrasts unfavourably with the warmth and varied colours of the materials in the older parts of the building. To the side it has structure, described as having one and a half storeys, with predominantly stone walls ('the stone building'), and whose gabled pantile roof broadly reflects the form and pitch of the main building.
8. The proposed extensions would replace low and unobtrusive, flat roofed structures partially constructed in timber, which are attached to the rear of the stone building. The ridge of the proposed two storey section would match the ridge height of the stone building but, compared to it, it would have a much greater eaves height. That would give it a significant bulk, such that it would not appear subordinate to the stone building, and there would be an awkward and contrived junction where the two would meet, thus resulting in a disjointed appearance.
9. Additionally, the pitch of its roof would be markedly shallower than the sloping roofs on the other parts of the host. As a result of that, coupled with its height, the proposed two storey extension would have a rather squat form which would be at odds with the generally much more vertical proportions in the host building, and other principal buildings nearby.
10. The proposed single storey extension would be much lower in height than the two storey element, but its flat roofed form would jar with the retained roofs on the host property. It would also project much further to the rear than the structures it would replace, and significantly beyond the rear face of the existing extension. Having regard to cumulative impacts, for the above reasons, the resultant property would appear overwhelmed by extensions and it would have a contrived, complex and incongruous form.
11. I am also concerned regarding the proposed use of brickwork to match the existing extension, but accept that appropriate facing materials could be made the subject of a planning condition should the appeal be allowed.
12. No parts of the scheme would be prominent in the streetscene, although the two storey element would be visible through vegetation and over boundary treatment from the side of 1 Court Lane, and in glimpsed views through the gap to the side of 4 Silver Street. Additionally, it would be seen from more private vantage points including the rear car park of the Royal George Public House ('the PH'), and nearby gardens. In those views, its form would be at odds with the SCA's prevailing character.
13. The PH is a Grade II listed building which dates from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To the rear it has a long single storey, red brick outbuilding, with a steeply pitched pantile roof, and whose side wall forms the

boundary with the appeal site. For the reasons set out above, the form of this proposal would be at odds with the host and the prevailing character of the area. As a result, it would also jar with the appearance of this historic outbuilding, and would harm the listed building's setting.

14. As it would fail to integrate with, or complement, the character of the area, and as it would not reinforce local distinctiveness, the scheme would conflict with those requirements in BLP Policies 28S, 29 and 30. For the reasons above, it would also conflict with the stance in BLP Policies 29 and 41S on the protection of heritage assets.
15. However, given the modest scale of this scheme in the context of the SCA, and the limited public views of it, in the words of the Framework, the harm to the significance of these designated heritage assets would be 'less than substantial'. I return to this later.

Other matters

16. The proposal would provide additional accommodation for the current, and any future, occupants, in an accessible village location. These are very modest public benefits, but nonetheless count in the scheme's favour.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

17. Summing up, the scheme would harm the character and appearance of the SCA, and it would fail to preserve the setting of the adjacent listed building. In accordance with the Framework, these are matters to which I attribute great weight. However, as the harm would be less than substantial, I am required to weigh that harm against the public benefits of the proposal.
18. In this case, the harm that the scheme would cause would not be outweighed by the scheme's very modest public benefits. Having given great weight to the conservation of heritage assets, and in the absence of clear and convincing justification for harm to them, I conclude that as well as conflicting with the development plan, the scheme would conflict with the Framework.
19. For those reasons, and having regard to all other matters raised, including representations by interested parties, the appeal is dismissed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR