



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 June 2024

by H Marriott MPlan MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 June 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/D/23/3336787
78 Risborough Road, Bedford MK41 9QP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Stephen Watson against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/01776/S73A.
 - The development is described as: 'change of material use on front, left side and small area on right side using hardy plank cladding'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The change of material to cladding relates to a single storey front/side extension at the appeal site, which received planning permission in 2022 (LPA Ref 22/01552/FUL) (the original permission). The Council attached a condition (Condition 3) to the original permission requiring that the external surfaces of the extension be finished with the same materials as those of the existing building to which it is connected, in the interest of visual amenity.
3. It is evident from the application form that the works have started and the original permission has been carried out other than in accordance with Condition 3. I saw during my site visit that the front/side extension has been finished in a grey colour cladding comprising of horizontal boarding and a tile roof.
4. The Council confirmed that it treated the application under Section 73a of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (the Act). The appellant submitted a Householder Application for Planning Permission, and the reason for the appeal on the appeal form related to refusal of planning permission for the development. I have therefore decided the appeal on the basis that planning permission was sought and refused for the use of cladding at the appeal site.
5. Following the Council's decision, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was revised on 20 December 2023, the same date the appeal form was signed by the appellant. As the policies within the Framework most relevant to the appeal have not substantively changed from the previous version, I am satisfied the main parties would not be prejudiced by deciding the appeal with regard to the revised Framework.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is the effect that the cladding has had on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and its attached neighbour, and surrounding area.

Reasons

7. Risborough Road is a residential tree-lined street fronted by two-storey, semi-detached dwellings that form a strong building line with gaps between pairs. The regularity in the scale and form of development along Risborough Road is further emphasised by an overall consistency in the materials, which typically include brickwork facades, tiled roofs and white render, pebbledash or hanging tiles to front bay projections. Whilst there have been some physical alterations to dwellings in the vicinity, including extensions and introduction of other materials, there is a sense of balance between semi-detached pairs and a consistency of materials that makes a positive contribution to area's cohesive character and appearance.
8. The appeal site (No 78) forms one half of a semi-detached pair fronting Risborough Road. Notwithstanding the modest front/side extension to No 78, the host property and its attached neighbour (No 76) retain an overall balance and sense of symmetry. Together with the use of red brick walls, a tiled roof and render on the front bay window projection, the pair also reflect the prevailing characteristics of the area.
9. The use of grey cladding on the front/side extension at the appeal site, forward of the principal elevation, draws the eye and emphasises the cladding as an alien material that is at odds with the neighbouring property and the surrounding area. Moreover, the horizontal lines of the boarding gives the extension a contemporary appearance, which contrasts with the form and character of the host property and has undermined the visual cohesion between it and No 76.
10. I conclude that that the cladding has had a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and its attached neighbour, and surrounding area. Conflict therefore arises with Policies 28S 29, and 30 of the Bedford Borough Council Local Plan 2030 (2020) (LP), insofar as they require development to be of a high-quality design; to promote local distinctiveness; integrate well with and complement the character of the area; be the highest design quality and contribute positively to the area's character and identity; and give particular attention to the quality of development in terms of materials.
11. There is also conflict with the Council's Residential Extensions, New Dwellings and Small Infill Developments Design Guidance (2000), notably Design Code E2 which requires development to reflect the existing architectural character of existing buildings in both detail and materials. For the same reasons, the development is also contrary to Paragraph 135 of the Framework which requires planning decisions to ensure that development establishes or maintains a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live.

Other Matters

12. The appellant has provided examples of various alterations undertaken to other dwellings in the area including, but not limited to the use of cladding. I saw a number of the properties cited during my site visit, including those on Risborough Road (Nos 12, 16, 20, 28, 30, 38, 33-49, 51-53, 58, 66, 74, 100, 104-106, 110-112 and 122), Wendover Drive (Nos 103, 126 and 144) and Aylesbury Road (Nos 65, 74, 84-88, 99 and 106). Although I do not know the planning circumstances behind the examples given, none that I saw were usefully comparable to the appeal scheme in terms of the material treatment, the relationship of that material to host dwelling, nor with the attached neighbour. In any event, I have considered the development on its own merits and site-specific circumstances.
13. Policies LP31 (The impact of development access impacts) and LP32 (The impact of development disturbance pollution) of the LP are also referenced in the Council's decision notice. However, these two policies do not relate to the main issue, and I have no reason to find any conflict with the development and these LP policies. In any case, this does not alter the harm identified in respect of the main issue and the conflict with the development plan as a whole.
14. The appellant has stated that cladding meets the durability and sustainability standards expected in construction practices in the area. Be that as it may, there is limited evidence to indicate that matching materials would not have achieved similar standards without the harm to the character and appearance identified. This consideration therefore carries limited weight in favour of the appeal.

Conclusion

15. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

H Marriott

INSPECTOR