



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 January 2025

by **A. J. Boughton MA (IPSD) Dip.Arch. Dip.(Conservation) RIBA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 February 2025

Appeal Reference: APP/K0235/D/24/3356452

32 Church End Biddenham Bedford MK40 4AR

- 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 and Mrs Honey against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/01267/FUL
 - The development proposed is Front, side and rear ground floor extensions including attached garage, with 2-storey side extension and associated internal alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The Main Issue is the effect of the development upon the character and appearance of the area and upon the Biddenham Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. Located within Biddenham Conservation Area (BCA), 32 Church End (No.32) is a modest two-storey house dating from the middle decades of the twentieth century. The BCA is characterised by its linear pattern with detached houses in large plots that line the two principal roads, Main Road and Church End. Recognising the contribution made by (what it refers to as) modern houses within the BCA¹, the BCA Character Appraisal remarks that Biddenham's distinctiveness derives from, amongst other things, the 'preservation of its rural village character' and refers to the hedged enclosures of large plots. The absence of pavements or defined road edges but the presence of elements such as verges, trees, and disposition of buildings within predominantly soft boundary treatments are indicative of a slow rural pace of change rather than rapid suburban expansion. The qualitative contribution of such diverse factors as these may individually be of little importance but are cumulatively formative of distinctiveness which is resistant of urban/suburban morphologies.
4. The BCA character appraisal (character appraisal) points to 'the *evenness* of the development pattern' avoiding terms suggestive of suburban homogeneity. This acknowledges variety in age, materials, size, (and a varying set-back from the

¹ There are many

road) of individual houses² which contribute to the character of the BCA over time as aligning individual houses that stand with a good degree of separation between plots.

5. The proposal would add significantly to the existing modestly-sized house at each side leaving little separation from either boundary effectively filling the whole width of the plot. In that regard the appellant points to an extant permission³ in a presentation of a fallback argument. In consequence, it is the difference between what may yet be legally implemented from that permission and what is addressed in this appeal and the effects which follow which should bear consideration. That 'additional' development is a single storey extension to the east side of No.32⁴ which would include an integral garage and a single storey extension running along the shared boundary. This part of the proposal would infill the space to the boundary whereas the single garage in the extant consent would be well set back from the main house and not impinge upon the apparent separation of No.32 from No.30.
6. The appellant disputes that important gaps between houses exist in the relevant part of the conservation area by reference to a number of images. My assessment of the significance of gaps is the degree to which individual houses appear as separated from those adjacent, which may include consideration of a number of factors including the amount of greenery and views across adjacent frontages.⁵
7. In terms of management the BCA character appraisal also points to the need for care, stating 'in particular...redevelopment of individual houses within large plots may have an impact on the character of the Conservation Area'. Whilst I note the appellant's comments in this regard, the cumulative effect of encroaching upon space between individual houses risks detriment to this important aspect of the character of the BCA. That the Council have permitted a large extension to the western, less-sensitive, side of No.32 tends to emphasise the importance preserving visual separation from No.30.
8. At present the frontage of No.32 retains significant greenery and is informally laid out, whereas No.30 (adjacent) presents a large, gravelled forecourt fronted by a dwarf wall, frontage greenery largely absent. Images provided by the appellant show the importance of frontage greenery along Church End and the effect of its absence upon character and appearance. Whilst a small cluster of trees separates No. 32 from its neighbour (No.30) in approach views, it is apparent that these would not entirely disguise the effect of extending No.32 to the intervening fenced boundary. The appellant has not provided much contextual information nor it is indicated how the foregarden area would be laid out, however even if such matters could be resolved by a suitable condition to require a scheme of layout and planting, the proposal would leave no room for planting along the shared boundary. From some frontage viewpoints the gap between these houses would no longer be apparent.
9. Taken as a whole, this directs a conclusion of harm and conflict with Policies 29 and 41S of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 (BBLP) which seek high design quality and the protection or enhancement of heritage assets, in this case pointing to the general duty set out in Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and

² As distinct from a rural informality or the repetitive layouts of a suburban estate

³ 22/02738/FUL approved 16 February 2023

⁴ towards No.30

⁵ Such as that shown by the appellant at 4.7

Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (LBCAA) which seeks that development should preserve or enhance the special character and appearance of a conservation area. I conclude that the proposal would lead to a minor, less than substantial harm to the BCA. Having regard to Paragraph 215 of the Framework, I have nothing before me to demonstrate a public benefit would arise from what is proposed nor is it shown that there are no other ways of providing this accommodation which would not have the effect I have identified.

10. For the reasons given and taking all matters raised into account, I therefore conclude that the appeal cannot succeed.

Andrew Boughton

INSPECTOR