



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 May 2025

by G Pannell BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 May 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/W/25/3362395

Land on the North-East side of Woodcote Road, Bedford, MK41 8FB

- 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 AMP Clean Energy against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/02430/FUL.
 - The development proposed is Construction and operation of a micro energy storage project and surrounding fence.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for Construction and operation of a micro energy storage project and surrounding fence at Land on the North-East side of Woodcote Road, Bedford, MK41 8FB in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 24/02430/FUL, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises an area of amenity land on the corner of Woodcote Road and Overdale Road which contains a number of trees. Directly adjacent to the appeal site is a block of residential flats, Oakdale Place and the site is separated from this by an existing palisade fence. The area is predominantly residential and urban in character.
4. The notable form and scale of the surrounding development compared to the proposal means that the latter would not appear overly dominant within its surroundings, despite its utilitarian appearance. The form of the nearby buildings and the sites location within the existing trees means that the development would not appear incongruous within its surroundings and being within a built up area, the proposal would not be unduly obtrusive.
5. Whilst the presence of renewable energy structures are not evident, there are a number of other infrastructure related developments within the locality such as broadband boxes and the electricity substation associated with Oakdale Place. I am not of the view that the proposed development, comprising a storage facility of approximately 6.05 by 3.9m, with an approximate height of 2.4m, would appear alien in such a context and the proposal would not be overly dominant within wider

views, noting its location within a group of existing trees, to be considered harmful to the character and appearance of the area.

6. Whilst I accept that the storage facility would be visible through the existing vegetation, especially during winter months, it would not be overly prominent and would be viewed in association with the existing street furniture and the backdrop of the palisade fencing and car park of Oakdale Place.
7. The National Planning Policy Framework at paragraph 161 highlights that the planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 whilst improving resilience. The proposal would enable the storage of energy during periods of high renewable generation, enabling it to be exported to the grid when demand is high and renewable power is not otherwise available. This reduces the amount of carbon used, with the proposal expected to save 160 tonnes of carbon each year and 4,800 over the projects lifetime.
8. Paragraph 168 sets out that when determining applications for all forms of low carbon energy development and their associated infrastructure, significant weight should be given to the benefits associated with the proposal's contribution to a net zero future and I have had regard to these benefits of the scheme in my considerations.
9. Therefore, for the reasons given, the proposal would not cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area and would accord with policies 28S (i) and (ii); 29(i) and (ii); 30(i) and (ii) and 57(i) of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030. These policies collectively seek development to contribute positively to the area's character and identity having regard to the context, visual appearance and landscape character of the area.

Conditions

10. The Council has suggested 3 conditions which I have considered against the advice in the Framework and Planning Practice Guidance. As well as the standard implementation condition, I have imposed a condition to ensure that the proposal is carried out in accordance with the approved plans to provide certainty. I have also imposed a condition requiring details of any external lighting to be submitted and agreed in order to protect both the character and appearance of the area and to ensure any lighting would not be harmful to the amenity of nearby residents.
11. Given the proximity of the proposed development to the existing trees I have also found it necessary to require the protection of the existing trees during the construction period.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed.

G Pannell

INSPECTOR

Schedule of Conditions

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawing nos 1A, 2A, 4, 5, 7, P1 Paldin Wood Fencing, P2 Paldin Wood Fencing
- 3) Details of any lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before the development hereby permitted is first brought into operational use. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
- 4) All the trees shown on the location plan and site layout plan and/or any trees whose canopies overhang the site shall be protected by strong fencing, the location and type to be previously approved in writing by the local planning authority. The fencing shall be erected in accordance with the approved details before any equipment, machinery or materials are brought onto the site for the purposes of the development, and shall be maintained until all equipment, machinery and surplus materials have been removed from the site. Nothing shall be stored or placed within any fenced area, and the ground levels within those areas shall not be altered, nor shall any excavation be made.

