



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 May 2025 by E Street BSc (Hons) MSc

Decision by John Morrison BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30th June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/D/25/3362772

14 Thomas James Close, Elstow, Bedford MK42 9BQ

- 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 S Miah against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/01978/FUL.
 - The development proposed is described as “loft conversion with rear dormer and front windows”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure and Preliminary Matter

2. The site visit was undertaken by a representative of the Inspector whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.
3. The description on the application form marginally differs to the decision notice. However, I am satisfied that the original description accurately describes the development and is therefore reflected above.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area with specific regard to the Elstow Conservation Area (ECA) and the setting of a grade II listed building.

Reasons for the Recommendation

5. The appeal site is a detached building within an enclave of other dwellings. The building is well-proportioned, mostly original with only a small form of extension by virtue of a conservatory. The wider modern development comprises large, detached dwellings with largely uncluttered roofscapes. This is also reflected with the wider ECA by the consistent and unaltered form of surrounding buildings. The quality of the buildings' traditional architecture and composition, both modern and historic, contributes positively to the significance of the ECA.
6. The grade II listed Elstow Lower School is located along the high street with dwellings surrounding it of varying ages and scales. The appeal site is the closest dwelling to the building and is viewed from both the front and rear of the listed building. Besides this, the visual setting of the school is fairly limited by virtue of its own defined boundaries and being its own separate entity from the surrounding dwellings. Due to its historical and current use, it also has a sense of cultural and social significance as a community focal point.

7. Despite the proposal being to the rear of the property, it would be partially seen from the street and the school. Due to its form and scale, it would appear as an awkward and jarring addition detracting from the simple and well-proportioned qualities of the building. Even though the appeal building is a more modern example in the local vicinity, it takes design cues from more traditional forms with which it would, as a result of the substance of the scheme, unacceptably contrast. Additionally, it would present an unusual form of development which is not typically seen due to the uncluttered and unaltered open local roofscapes. The lack of obvious vantage points for the scheme would not reduce the harms I have found to the point of them being acceptable.
8. The proposed dormer would be visible from the rear of the school and within its curtilage. The separation distance between the two is small and the overall scale of the dormer would detract from the consistent and traditional form of the school. Whilst the newer dwellings have changed the visual setting of the building and made it more contained and compact, the proposal would be harmfully prominent from within the curtilage and its scale and siting would detract from the architectural significance and visual qualities thereof. Resultantly, the harms found above would extend to the significance of the school's setting. Moreover, and given the above assessment, the proposal would neither preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the ECA. Due to the scale of the development in context, the harm would be less than substantial. As directed by paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (the Framework), the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
9. The Council have implied that the benefits of the proposal are only private, and the appellant has not provided any additional evidence to convince me otherwise. Resultantly, only very limited weight would be given thereto. As a result, they would be incapable of outweighing the great weight given to the harm to the ECA and the setting of a grade II listed building. Therefore, and overall, there would be conflict with Policies 28S, 29, 30, 41S of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 and the Framework which together seek to ensure that development proposals are of a high-quality design and conserve the historic environment, amongst other things.

Conclusion and Recommendation

10. For the reasons given above, the appeal scheme would not comply with the development plan, and I have been given no other compelling reason, taking into account other material considerations advanced, to deviate therefrom. I therefore recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

E Street

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

11. I have considered all the submitted evidence and my representative's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed

John Morrison

INSPECTOR