
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 August 2025

by **Mark Caine BSc (Hons) MTPL MRTPI LSRA**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1st September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/W/25/3366440

Land to the rear of No 1 and No 2 Post Office Cottages, High Street, Little Staughton, Bedford MK44 2BH

- 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 Philip Benns against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/01864/S73A.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Change use of land from agricultural to garden'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The site address provided in the application form; appeal form and decision notice are all different. However, the appeal form sets out that the proposed development relates to land behind No 1 and No 2 Post Office Cottages. I have therefore amended the site address accordingly as it is more accurate.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The appeal relates to a roughly triangular shaped piece of enclosed grass land that extends outwardly from the original rear gardens of the Post Office Cottages. The immediate context of the appeal site is characterised by large two-storey detached frontage dwellings that are set out in a linear pattern. These properties predominantly have relatively modest and uniformed garden areas that abut open fields and agricultural land beyond. The immediate area therefore has a strong sense of being open and spacious, which contributes positively to its prevailing rural character and appearance.
5. The development has resulted in the existing garden areas at the rear extending significantly towards a pond within the adjacent field. This results in the domestication of a substantial area of the field, extending a residential use into an area with a strong rural character. Although a planning condition could be imposed to restrict some forms of development which could otherwise be permitted, the likely proliferation of domestic paraphernalia such as garden furniture and children's play equipment could not practically be controlled by conditions. The overall result would be a development that is overtly domestic in appearance,

in stark contrast to the surrounding, largely rural undeveloped landscape. It thereby significantly encroaches into unspoilt open countryside.

6. It is suggested that other gardens along High Street have been extended to a similar degree, however, other than for the sliver of land to the rear of Ash House, it is not clear whether these have received planning permission or are lawful. Moreover, all but the area of land to the rear of Ash House are on the opposite side of a nearby pond and are well screened by a line of trees and do not form a part of the immediate context. They are therefore not in areas that share the same characteristics that apply to the appeal development.
7. The Council also measure the recent housing development on Colmworth Road, which I am informed was allowed as a specific exception for affordable housing, to be around 90 metres away from the appeal site. Some of these properties front a new highway and the domesticated areas of land to the rear of them are tightly drawn. Accordingly, on the evidence presented I am not satisfied that the circumstances of the examples above are directly comparable to the appeal development before me.
8. I also have no substantive reason to doubt that the site has not been included for further assessment following the Council's 'Call for sites' process. In addition, the level of local residents' support or objection for a scheme are not determining factors in the consideration of an appeal.
9. Although I have determined the appeal based on its individual merits, in this instance, to allow this development would make it more difficult for the Council to resist other similar proposals in this area and I consider that the cumulative effect would exacerbate the harm which I have described above. Whilst my decision does not turn on this matter, it adds some weight to my conclusion.
10. I therefore find that the development causes unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area. As such, it conflicts with Policies 7S, 28S, 29 and 30 of the Bedford Borough Council Local Plan 2030 (2020). Amongst other matters, these require development to have a positive relationship with the surrounding area, to respect context, recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and enhance the landscape.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons given above, the development conflicts with the development plan and there are no material considerations that warrant taking a decision otherwise than in accordance with it. The appeal should therefore be dismissed.

Mark Caine

INSPECTOR