



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 December 2025

by **C Coles MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/W/25/3373628

St Bedes School, Dorms Annexe No.1, Coldharbour Road, Upper Dicker, East Sussex BN27 3QH

- 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 Mrs Kylie Francis of Bedes School Trust against the decision of Wealden District Council.
 - The application Ref is WD/2024/2528/FR.
 - The development proposed is external refurbishment and cedar steel grey C15 cladding fitted to the building.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Council altered the address of the development during the consideration of the application to read 'St Bedes School, Dorms Annexe No.1, Coldharbour Road, Upper Dicker, East Sussex BN27 3QH'. The appellant confirmed this is the correct address. I am therefore satisfied that the cases of the main parties would not be prejudiced by use of the above address. I have determined the appeal accordingly.
3. The Council altered the description of the development during the consideration of the application to read 'external refurbishment and cedar steel grey C15 cladding fitted to the building'. This is a more concise description of the proposal and removes superfluous text from that which also appears in the appeal form. I am therefore satisfied that the cases of the main parties would not be prejudiced by use of the above description. I have determined the appeal accordingly.
4. At the time of my site visit I saw that the cedar cladding had already been fitted to the outside of the building. Retrospective as referred to in the application form and decision notice does not constitute an act of development. I have dealt with the appeal on the basis that planning permission is sought for the cedar cladding.
5. Item 2 on the decision notice is not a reason for refusal but an explanatory note which fulfils the requirements of article 35(2) of the Development Management Procedure Order. Item 2 states that the Council had regard to guidance at paragraph 39 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) but that the reason for refusal would not be overcome without major revision therefore no negotiation took place. It remains the case that the development has already occurred leaving little room for negotiation. As a result, I will not consider item 2 further in this decision.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

7. The appeal site contains a pair of semi-detached houses within the grounds of Bedes School. The properties are located on a prominent position adjacent to the junction of Coldharbour Road and Camberlot Road which are two of the main roads through the village.
8. The surrounding development comprises school buildings and residential development with the dominant materials being brickwork, tile and tile hanging, render and timber cladding of muted colour and traditional appearance. The development comprises unbroken, modern grey composite cladding on the wall elevations of the building. The roof comprises red tiles.
9. The development uses a material that is not reflected elsewhere in the immediate vicinity of the site and the overall appearance of the development appears unsympathetic to the surrounding built environment and detracts from the character of the area.
10. My attention has been drawn to other development within the locality of the site. One of the three dwellings to the south, at the corner of Michelham Priory Road and Coldharbour Road is cited as an example of development which uses substantially different materials when compared to those on the older school building opposite the appeal site which is the dominant building in the environment. The dwelling cited utilises red colour tile hanging which is akin to the red brick colour and tile hanging on the older school building and white render which takes its cue from the white timber detailing on the school building and render to the boundary treatment. The timber weatherboarding on the subservient outbuilding is designed to weather and blend with the landscaping which the cedar cladding will not do and is of a much smaller scale than the development.
11. Whilst I have been presented with examples of development within the local area that have a range and mix of external materials on the walls, the dominant theme is brickwork, render, hanging tiles and one example of exposed flint on an ecclesiastical building. The tone of the materials is muted, subtle and complimentary and largely broken up on the buildings with a mix of materials. I have not been provided with any other examples of grey cedar composite cladding or composite cladding that is unbroken across each elevation of the building. The use of unbroken composite cladding which is an alien material in the immediate vicinity of the site on a prominent building has a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area.
12. In conclusion, the development utilises a material that is not found within the immediate vicinity of the site. As a result, the appearance of the development is out of character with the surrounding area which has a harmful effect on the street scene. The development is therefore contrary to policy EN27 of the Wealden Local Plan 1998 (WLP) and SPO13 of the Wealden Core Strategy (WCS) which seek to ensure the use of materials should respect the character of adjoining development and be of high quality.

Other Matters

13. Whilst the cladding may have improved the energy efficiency of the dwellings and may prevent damp, I have not been provided with evidence of a damp problem within the dwellings or that repairs to the existing brickwork and tile hanging would not have solved the problem. I have also not been provided with evidence that other options to improve the energy efficiency of the dwellings or prevent damp were considered before the cladding was installed which may have enabled a more sympathetic material to be used. In any event, the reported benefits associated with the development do not outweigh the harm caused to the character and appearance of the area from the cladding.
14. Whilst the WCS (adopted 2013) and the WLP (adopted 1998) predate the current Framework, policies EN27 of the WLP and SPO13 of the WCS are in general compliance with the Framework and are therefore not considered out-of-date or to have limited weight.
15. The appellant raises concerns over the Council's handling of the application. This is a matter for the Council and beyond the scope of this appeal. I have determined the appeal on its planning merits.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

C Coles

INSPECTOR