



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 January 2026

by Thomas Courtney BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26th January 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/T2215/W/25/3374169

18 Station Road, Longfield, Kent, DA3 7QD

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr A Patel against the decision of Dartford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is DA/25/00181/OUT.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of existing mix use building and erection of new mixed use, three-storey building with a ground floor pharmacy with 1 replacement and 9 new residential dwellings above, parking, access, bins and cycle provision (landscape reserved matters).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Outline planning permission is sought, with landscaping as a reserved matter. Submitted details of the reserved matter are treated as indicative.
3. On 16 December 2025, the Government published a consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Whilst broad changes to the structure of the Framework are proposed as part of this consultation, these proposals could be subject to further change and can only be given very limited weight at this stage. It has therefore not been necessary to consult the parties on the changes, and in reaching my decision, I have had regard to the Framework published in December 2024.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. Station Road forms the primary commercial frontage within Longfield and is a relatively busy linear high street of small shops and services rising towards the railway station. The combination of pedestrian activity, commercial signage and a consistent pattern of pitched roofs and gables addressing the street gives this part of the centre a distinctive and legible character. By contrast, Essex Road has a quieter and more utilitarian frontage with simpler elevations before transitioning into a purely residential street lined with two-storey suburban dwellings.
6. The appeal site is currently occupied by a modest two-storey building of plain and utilitarian appearance. It has a commercial ground floor and residential units above. The principal shopfront addresses Station Road, while the Essex Road

elevation is noticeably plainer and more subdued. Although the building has little architectural merit, its modest scale, pitched roofs and recessive form mean it sits unobtrusively within the streetscene and does not disturb the transition from the commercial frontage to the residential character of Essex Road. A replacement building at this corner therefore carries an opportunity to reinforce townscape legibility at this visually prominent location.

7. The proposal would adopt a roofscape that combines gabled and pitched elements interspersed with two recessed sections set between them. These recessed portions comprise a mix of shallow flat-topped and part-pitched roof elements rather than a single continuous roof ridge. The appellant suggests that this approach introduces variety and articulation. However, when experienced from the public realm, the points at which the roof is cut back to accommodate the flat and part-pitched sections, together with differing ridge heights, would create an irregular and somewhat visually unsettled and fragmented profile. Rather than reading as a simple and legible roof form, the building would present a visually busy and fragmented roofscape that would lack coherence and refinement at this prominent corner location.
8. Along Essex Road, the long side elevation would appear unbalanced and visually awkward. The lack of openings and architectural interest on the section nearest the corner would be particularly noticeable. Although a limited number of shallow lintels are indicated at first floor level, the fenestration pattern would be repetitive and lacking in modulation, depth or hierarchy. The ground floor, notwithstanding its commercial use, would be largely blank and devoid of glazing, articulation or detailing that might contribute to visual interest, permeability or activity within the streetscene. The limited presence or absence of changes in plane, material variation, projecting eaves, string courses or other secondary detailing would result in a flat and utilitarian appearance, offering little visual interest.
9. Although the increased scale would not be objectionable in principle in this urban context, the shortcomings in the architectural resolution mean that the additional bulk would be read more starkly in the townscape. I acknowledge that the appellant has sought to respond to the previous appeal decision by incorporating pitched roofs into the scheme, in contrast to the earlier flat-roofed approach. However, the fragmented roofscape, weak corner resolution and limited detailing would cause the development to appear incongruous and somewhat obtrusive, thereby drawing attention to its greater mass rather than integrating it coherently into the streetscene.
10. The appellant additionally argues that the gabled elements would add articulation to Station Road and that the proposal would represent an improvement over the existing tired structure. However, the architectural finish of the proposed development along its Essex Road elevation would be clumsy and inappropriate. The palette of standard brickwork and basic render, absent any higher quality or locally distinctive materials or detailing, would not elevate the building or positively enhance its setting. The combination of a fragmented roofscape, weak corner treatment and lack of detailing and interest would result in a scheme that would fall short of the visually attractive, contextually responsive and well-resolved design sought by local and national planning policy.
11. I appreciate that commercial layouts often require uninterrupted wall space for shelving and storage. However, this does not justify a mostly blank and inactive

frontage at a prominent corner location. In this case, the operational needs of the pharmacy could reasonably be met alongside a more active and visually engaging frontage through alternative internal arrangements or more generous glazing and detailing.

12. The appellant also draws a comparison with the Co-op building on the opposite corner of the junction, suggesting that the appeal proposal would be similar in form and appearance. I do not find this comparison persuasive. The limited architectural quality of the Co-op building does not establish a positive townscape benchmark to be replicated. The existence of a building of modest or unremarkable design nearby does not justify the introduction of further unbalanced or undistinguished architecture at a highly visible corner location. Rather, the prominence of the appeal site within the commercial centre heightens the need for a well-considered design response that enhances, rather than perpetuates, the townscape.
13. The appellant also submits that any concerns regarding brick type, materials or roof tiles could be addressed by condition. Whilst materials conditions may reasonably refine the finish of a scheme whose architectural form is already acceptable, they cannot address deficiencies in the underlying design. In this case, the harm arises from the massing composition, roofscape configuration, awkward fenestration and weak handling of the prominent corner, rather than from the colour or specification of external finishes. Even with higher specification materials, the building would continue to exhibit the same fragmented roof form and visually unbalanced appearance. A condition would therefore not overcome the design shortcomings identified.
14. Given this, the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. Accordingly, it would conflict with Policy M1 of the Dartford Local Plan 2037 insofar as it seeks to ensure proposals are well-designed, respond to local context, and are suitable in terms of mass, form, articulation, detailing and roof form.

Other Matters

15. The development would deliver nine net additional dwellings in a sustainable town centre location close to public transport, services and employment. Such windfall provision would contribute to the Borough's housing supply and carries weight in favour of the proposal. The redevelopment of a small previously developed site to provide a mix of housing is also consistent with national objectives relating to urban regeneration and efficient land use. The proposal would also provide an improved commercial unit which, as a modernised pharmacy, would sustain an existing community facility within the District Centre. These social and economic benefits attract further weight in support of the scheme.
16. No substantive objections have been raised by statutory consultees in respect of highway safety, parking, access or servicing, subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions. The submitted parking survey indicates that sufficient on-street capacity exists at peak times, and the Highway Authority confirms that trip generation could be accommodated within the local network. Whilst concerns regarding congestion and parking stress have been raised by interested parties, no compelling technical evidence before me would justify withholding planning permission on these grounds.

17. The proposal seeks to secure ecological enhancements and achieve the mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain by providing a green roof. I note the appellant's explanation that the flat-roofed elements are required to accommodate the green roof to support biodiversity net gain. Whilst the delivery of ecological enhancements is supported, it should not justify roof forms that are discordant or poorly integrated within the streetscene. Biodiversity net gain can be delivered through a range of measures that do not require the dilution of the scheme's architectural integrity.
18. The building would provide residential units that meet the Nationally Described Space Standards and would provide private outdoor amenity space for future occupiers. Environmental Health have raised no objection subject to conditions regulating construction impacts, noise, contamination and lighting.
19. The appellant also highlights that the construction phase would generate temporary employment and economic activity, and that future occupants would support local shops, services and businesses within the centre. These are credible economic benefits that attract further limited weight in favour of the proposal, both during the build period and thereafter through increased local expenditure.
20. The appellant also refers to emerging national reforms which, if adopted, would encourage the delivery of housing near railway stations. The appeal site lies close to Longfield Station, and the proposed policy direction would, in principle, support higher density brownfield development in such locations. However, these reforms have not been formally adopted and may be subject to amendment. Accordingly, they attract only limited weight in the determination of this appeal at the present time.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

21. The Council is able to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, such that the most important policies for determining the appeal are not deemed out-of-date. Consequently, the need to boost housing supply carries reduced weight in this instance.
22. Set against the benefits of the proposed scheme is the harm to the character and appearance of the area. This harm engages Policy M1 of the Dartford Local Plan and paragraph 135 of the Framework, both of which place strong emphasis on achieving well-designed, visually attractive development. In the context of a planned system with an adequate housing land supply, and where design quality remains a central objective of national policy, the adverse effects arising from the poor architectural resolution of the scheme carry significant weight. Even taking the benefits into account cumulatively, they would not clearly and demonstrably outweigh the harm identified.
23. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it.
24. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

Thomas Courtney

INSPECTOR