

Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 5 September 2016

by Robert Parker BSc (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 26 September 2016

Appeal A Appeal Ref: APP/B1225/W/16/3149778
32 and 34 Corfe Road, Stoborough, Wareham BH20 5AD

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Ian Crumpler against the decision of Purbeck District Council.
 - The application Ref 6/2015/0661, dated 27 October 2015, was refused by notice dated 6 January 2016.
 - The development proposal is to form car parking area to serve Nos 32 & 34 Corfe Road.
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Appeal B Appeal Ref: APP/B1225/W/16/3149774
32 and 34 Corfe Road, Stoborough, Wareham BH20 5AD

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Ian Crumpler against the decision of Purbeck District Council.
 - The application Ref 6/2016/0079, dated 4 February 2016, was refused by notice dated 31 March 2016.
 - The development proposal is to form car parking area to serve Nos 32 & 34 Corfe Road.
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Decision

1. Appeal A is dismissed and Appeal B is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in each case is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Stoborough Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The Stoborough Conservation Area is centred upon Corfe Road which is the main road running through the settlement. According to the Stoborough Conservation Area Appraisal Document (2012) (CAAD) its special interest is derived from the structure of reasonably intact burgage plots and the rural vernacular architecture of its buildings.
 4. Nos 32 and 34 Corfe Road are late nineteenth century estate cottages. Unlike many of the earlier buildings in the Conservation Area which have a direct relationship with the road, these properties are elevated and set back behind raised front gardens. Stone walls mark the boundary with the pavement and steps provide pedestrian access to the dwellings themselves.
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5. The CAAD identifies the appeal properties and the roadside wall as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. I concur with this analysis. The cottages are prominent and attractive features in the street scene, their aesthetic contribution enhanced by the spacious garden settings. The stone walls are important in providing a sense of enclosure to the street and continuity with similar walls elsewhere in the locality.

Appeal A

6. Both appeal proposals seek to provide an off-street car parking area with a single shared entrance onto Corfe Road. In the case of Appeal A this would involve the excavation of both front gardens and the construction of new retaining walls and access steps. The scheme would result in the near total loss of the front gardens which are important in creating a setting for the rural estate cottages behind. This would give rise to a significant and harmful change in character, with individual property frontages being dominated by parked vehicles and hard engineering works. The proposal to use local stone for the facing of retaining walls is commendable but would not adequately compensate for the loss of the lawns and soft landscaping.
7. I therefore conclude that the proposal under Appeal A would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Stoborough Conservation Area. As such, the scheme would be contrary to Policy D: Design and Policy LHH: Landscape, Historic Environment and Heritage of the adopted Purbeck Local Plan Part 1 (2012). These policies require development to positively integrate with its surroundings whilst also conserving the appearance, setting, character, interest and integrity of heritage assets.

Appeal B

8. The scheme being sought under Appeal B is a variant on the above. The parking area would be of similar dimensions but the intention is to retain a strip of raised land behind the existing stone wall on either side of the new entrance. This would facilitate the preservation of an existing hedge belonging to No 32 and new planting along the frontage of No 34. The parking area would require less excavation compared to Appeal A meaning that it would sit above pavement level and on a more pronounced slope.
9. Clearly there would be some advantages to this scheme. The hedging would provide some mitigation for the adverse visual impacts of the development and the retaining walls would be lower. However, neither of these factors would alter the fact that the proposal would lead to the loss of the front gardens and a significant length of stone boundary wall. Furthermore, they would not prevent the hardstanding and parked cars from being visible through the new opening. Schemes of this nature are not characteristic of the Conservation Area and for this reason I consider that it would appear incongruous. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposal under Appeal B would be harmful to the character and appearance of the Stoborough Conservation Area and in conflict with the aforementioned development plan policies.

Other Matters

10. The appellant has provided photographs of other off-street parking in the village, including a driveway at neighbouring No 36 Corfe Road. I do not know the background to these developments and therefore cannot determine whether

there are any parallels to either appeal scheme. Nevertheless, it seems to me that none of the cases are directly comparable in terms of the scale of engineering works necessary to create the parking area. I have therefore assessed both appeal proposals on their own merits, as I am required to do.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

11. I have had due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) contained in the Equality Act 2010, which sets out the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. Since the appellant's wife has a mobility impairment which is likely to develop into a permanent disability, she would have a protected characteristic for the purposes of the PSED.
12. Both proposals would provide convenient parking close to the dwelling and this would assist the appellant and his wife to remain in their existing home and within the community in which the appellant grew up. This would be a benefit of granting planning permission and I have attached it a moderate amount of weight.
13. However, I also have a statutory duty¹ to have regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Stoborough Conservation Area. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises at paragraph 132 that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.
14. I acknowledge that a decision to dismiss the appeals would have implications for the ability of the appellant and his wife to occupy their property in the long term. However, I am mindful that the harm to the Conservation Area would endure long after the personal circumstances have ceased to be relevant. I therefore consider that the need to conserve the Stoborough Conservation Area for future generations should take precedence.
15. Although individually objectionable, both proposals would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the Conservation Area as a whole. Paragraph 134 of the Framework states that in such circumstances the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The appellant contends that the appeal schemes would help to address the worsening parking problems in the village and make the dwellings more attractive to young families and older persons alike, thereby supporting a vibrant community. Whilst I accept that these are public benefits, they are fairly modest ones and are outweighed by the harm to the Conservation Area.
16. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that both appeals should be dismissed.

Robert Parker

INSPECTOR

¹ Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990