
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 December 2016

by Rory Cridland LLB (Hons), Solicitor

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

Decision date: 19 January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/W/16/3157685

Loudwater Baptist Church, 20 Station Road, Loudwater, Buckinghamshire, HP10 9TZ

- 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 Ms Natasha Seidel against the decision of Wycombe District Council.
 - The application Ref 16/05912/FUL, dated 23 March 2016, was refused by notice dated 25 May 2016.
 - The development proposed is demolition of former church and erection of two storey building to be used as a day nursery.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on highways safety with particular regard to parking.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located on Station Road, a busy main road in a mostly residential area. Although there are double yellow lines on the northern side, directly opposite the site there are a number of on-street short stay parking spaces which have a maximum stay of 20 minutes¹.
4. Policy CS20 of the Wycombe Development Framework Core Strategy (2008) requires new development to provide appropriate and effective parking provision. Furthermore, Table 7 of the Council's adopted Countywide Parking Guidance (2015) (CPG) sets out optimum standards for parking and provides details on the expected number of spaces for different types of development.
5. The appellant accepts that, due to site constraints, it would not be possible to include off-street parking as part of the development. This would fall below the optimum standards set out in the CPG. Nevertheless, the guidance recognises that each development is unique and the standards cannot predict exactly what will be required in all cases. As such, they are only a starting point and it is necessary to assess the *actual* impact of the proposal on nearby parking and judge whether it would result in material harm to highway safety.

¹ Monday to Saturday between 8am and 6:30pm.

6. The proposal would involve the demolition of the existing building and its replacement with a two storey nursery building. In view of the number of children that the development is intended to accommodate, it would require a greater number of staff than its existing use as a place of worship. While it is reasonable to expect some would travel to the site by public transport or on foot, there is no robust evidence before me which would indicate that this would be the case for the majority. Those who did travel by car would be likely to park in the surrounding residential streets where there already appeared to be a high demand for spaces. This would place considerable pressure on the availability of parking spaces in these areas which would be detrimental to highway safety.
7. Furthermore, at present the parking needs generated by the site would peak at weekends, a time when both parking demand and traffic levels are generally lower. However, the increased need for parking which would be generated by the proposal would coincide with times of peak traffic flow. While I acknowledge that the on-street parking opposite would accommodate some of this additional parking demand, the number of spaces is limited and is insufficient to fully accommodate it. This would place further pressure on parking in the surrounding residential streets. Moreover, there is, in view of the limited parking available nearby, a realistic likelihood that some drivers would seek to park directly outside the site, limiting traffic flow and materially jeopardising safety for other highway users.
8. Consequently, I consider the proposal would fail to provide effective and appropriate parking provision and, as such, would not accord with Policy CS20 of the Core Strategy or the CPG.
9. I note that the appellant has indicated that in the event that the proposed development was to be refused, the existing building could be converted to a nursery under permitted development rights. As such, it is argued that its impact on nearby parking and overall highway safety would be similar to the development proposed, catering to a similar number of children and requiring a similar number of employees. However, no robust evidence has been submitted which would indicate that the existing building could, in fact, be altered to accommodate such a use, or that any such change would in fact take place. I do not therefore consider the fall back position to provide sufficient justification for a departure from Policy CS20 or the CPG.

Conclusion

10. Accordingly, for the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed

Rory Cridland

INSPECTOR